

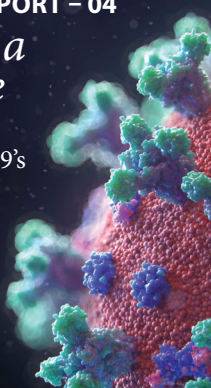
SOCIAL DISTANCE

A member of staff spends some time outdoors in the serene beauty of the St Augustine Campus' Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Greens. The greens are just one of the many open spaces that members of the campus community enjoy as they go about their study and work during the academic year. For the Academic Year 2020/2021, however, the campus remains relatively quiet. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes are being delivered online to the end of 2020. Nevertheless, faculty and staff are on campus, working to ensure that UWI St Augustine's role as a teaching and research institution continues without disruption. Although they are following the safety measures put in place to protect them from the Coronavirus, some still find a way to enjoy the natural wonder of the campus grounds. PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

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Back with a Vengeance

UWI experts tackle COVID-19's resurgence



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A Leader

Campus Registrar
Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill



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T&T, not Tribe

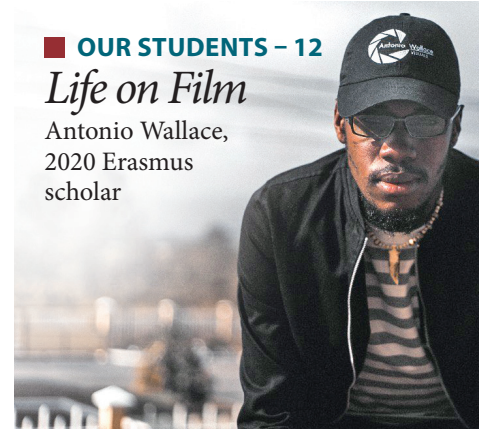
National symposium on race relations

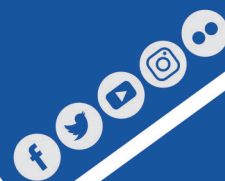


OUR STUDENTS - 12

Life on Film

Antonio Wallace,
2020 Erasmus scholar





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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

A very different academic year

The beginning of the academic year is always a special time for the campus. Traditionally, a new year signifies renewal and reinvigoration. While our new year begins in August-September, not January, the energy is the same. At UWI St Augustine, we look at the new academic year as a time to start over, build on our previous successes, improve upon our shortcomings and bring fresh enthusiasm - and dynamism - to our work and studies. This is our agenda for Academic Year 2020/2021.

However, this is an academic year like no other. COVID-19 has upended not only our education system, but education systems around the world. We expected and were prepared to make modifications to our operations, such as combining in-person and virtual teaching in a hybrid mode of delivery. These preparations were based on Trinidad and Tobago's outstanding response to the pandemic. Unfortunately, we have lost ground since then.

At the time of writing, the number of active cases has ballooned to 1,099. The spread has been alarmingly rapid. As part of its response to retrieve control, the Government mandated that teaching institutions be closed for an indefinite period that may extend to the end of 2020. In consideration of this decision, the St Augustine Campus took the decision to move fully to virtual teaching for the first semester of the new academic year.

Even if the closure restrictions are relaxed in the next few weeks, it would be unwise to move from this mode of delivery given the onset of community spread, the low probability of a vaccine being available in the short term, and the logistical cost of accommodating COVID-19 compliant classrooms and labs on site. On this last point, for example, we have determined that the capacity of fixed seating classrooms would have to be decreased by at least 85 per cent to comply with social distancing protocols.

We are not the only ones in this predicament. In the US, lawmakers and universities are in serious debate over the approach to reopening as the country continues to be one of the hardest hit by the Coronavirus. In South Korea, one of the great success stories of managing COVID-19, the government recently decided to close all schools in Seoul as over 200 students and staff were infected in just one institution. These are the current conditions and we have to make the best of them, even as we "roll with the punches".

At UWI St Augustine we will do everything we can to ensure the safety of the campus community while maintaining continuity in our operations and serving our students and society. Our faculties, departments and central administrative offices have spent several weeks putting things in place for on-line learning. The workload has been and continues to be heavy, but they are doing what is required to meet the needs of students. I appreciate their efforts and applaud them for their work ethic and commitment during this challenging time.

We will sometimes fall short. For those students



At UWI St Augustine we will do everything we can to ensure the safety of the campus community while maintaining continuity in our operations and serving our students and society.

that have experienced difficulties in accessing the services we provide, I wish to assure you that we will continue to do our best in rectifying our shortcomings. We ask for your understanding and patience. We place your welfare and your experience as students as our number one priority.

To ensure that our standard of service is not compromised, we have recommended that faculty and staff administer teaching on campus even though the classes themselves will be virtual. Likewise, all other campus operations will run with staff present on campus. We must not allow COVID-19 to disrupt our efforts to meet our commitments.

However, we must work safer and smarter. Our campus team has put several measures in place to protect those on site from the risk of the virus. These include mandatory face masks, increased

cleaning of work spaces, specialised health and safety training for support and security staff, and even staggered work hours and days. I am also imploring all members of the campus community to follow the guidelines that will keep them and their loved ones safe, social distancing in particular.

As part of our efforts to help students prepare for the new academic year we held virtual town halls with both the UWI St Augustine Guild of Students and the wider student body to share information and answer their questions. They were both well received and helpful to those who took part. Clear communication is one of our greatest assets at this time and we will continue to keep in close contact with the entire campus.

For months now, I have struggled to find the proper balance in my message between the unprecedented threats we are facing and a level of optimism in our ability to outlast this circumstance coupled with the possibility of making a substantial contribution to the national and regional COVID-19 response. We have done so. We continue to do so. Now it is time to get back to our primary purpose – preparing our citizens for future leadership. That mission is all the more urgent now as these are the leaders who will guide our journey in the post-COVID era, taking advantage of the opportunities that the pandemic has presented even as we strengthen our defenses against its ravages.

Academic Year 2020/2021 may be a year like no other, but it is the year we have. Let's move forward in cautious confidence and make the best of it.

Brian Copeland

PROFESSOR BRIAN COPELAND

Campus Principal

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SPECIAL REPORT

When the paradigm-shifting COVID-19 first came to T&T, the nation did a commendable job of controlling its spread. The University of the West Indies was at the heart of the effort, committing personnel, research, facilities and expertise. The University is now assisting with World Health Organisation (WHO) drug trials; UWI nurses were recruited to help with contact tracing of infected persons; and, at the behest of the Ministry of Health, the campus' halls of residence, Canada and Freedom Halls, are being used as step-down facilities for COVID-19 patients. In addition, UWI staff have been providing technical support for diagnostic testing that is being done at a UWI lab that was loaned to the Health Ministry.

But the last several weeks have seen a surge in cases, sparking concern that we squandered our early success and that our health services might be overwhelmed by an inundation of infections.

What happened?

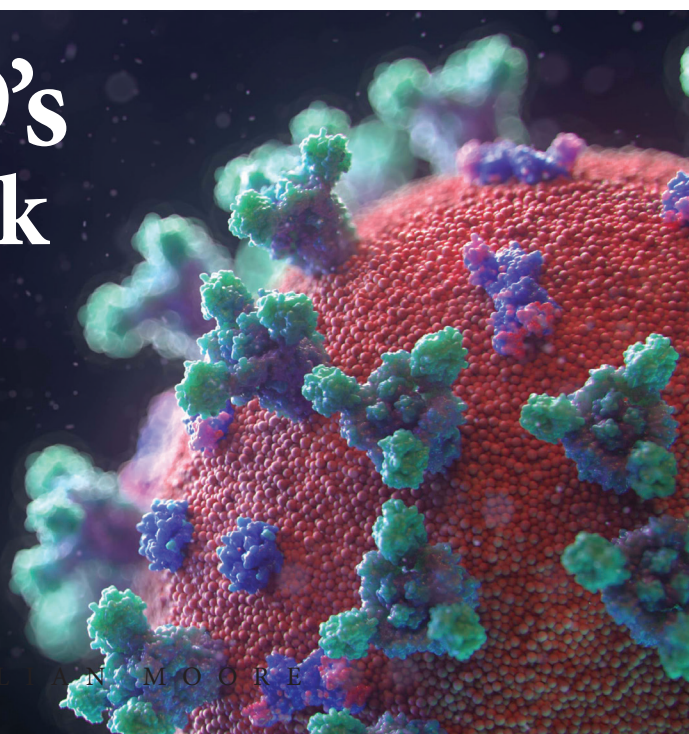
"This is the six-million-dollar question," said Professor Christopher Oura, who is a Professor of Veterinary Virology at UWI's Faculty of Medical Sciences at Mt Hope.

Speaking from Bristol, UK, from where he is currently conducting his UWI classes online, he said: "My opinion is that for those 80-odd days when everything was quiet, we'd got rid of the virus completely. What then probably happened was that the virus got into the country, probably through a person from Venezuela where the virus is circulating out of control."

COVID-19's Big Comeback

*What went wrong?
How do we stop it?*

BY GILLIAN MOORE



'... these non-pharmaceutical interventions do work and they should all be carried out. If we do that and we do take them seriously, we will reduce the spread of this virus and flatten the curve. Otherwise there is going to be exponential spread and that's going to result in an inundation of severe cases and severe stress on our health system.'

Professor Christopher Oura
Professor of Veterinary Virology



'We can't go back to exactly the same thing or we'll have the same thing again the result will be the same. We have to evolve. If we want that evolution to include close interactions with our friends and families and being able to hug people and shake their hands, we need to do the hard work now.'

Professor Christine Carrington
Professor of Molecular Genetics and Virology

Professor Oura added, "It then circulated in a hidden, silent way among that population and among the people they were interacting with in Trinidad. A lot of people are asymptomatic. Or cases are mild. It showed itself when we got a positive test, but by that time it had already spread. Now we're playing catch-up, trying to stop it through all the methods we've been told about by the Ministry of Health."

Professor of Molecular Genetics and Virology Dr Christine Carrington likened the spike in COVID-19 cases to a fire threatening to burn out of control: "We don't know what the 'match' was, but our behaviour is the tinder. Regardless of how this recent wave started, it is the behaviour of Trinidadians that promoted its spread."

However, she cited three possible sources: "it is most likely that it was imported via an undocumented immigrant, but it could also have been that someone like a healthcare worker who is in frequent close contact with quarantined returning residents became infected, or that it was circulating at very, very low levels all the time, although I think it would have come to light sooner if that was the case."

In spite of the frightening scenario he described, Professor Oura is optimistic that lockdown measures can turn our situation around.

"We know how this virus is spread: by relatively close contact, by droplet infection. So we know if people keep apart by two metres and wear masks, we're going to significantly reduce the spread. We know if people stay at home when they're sick, they're not going to be out there spreading the virus. We know that if it gets onto surfaces, we can easily disinfect them, and we know if it gets on hands, it can easily be deactivated by washing hands."

He concluded that "these non-pharmaceutical interventions do work and they should all be carried out."

If we do that and we do take them seriously, we will reduce the spread of this virus and flatten the curve. Otherwise there is going to be exponential spread and that's going to result in an inundation of severe cases and severe stress on our health system."

Like her colleague, Prof Carrington believes behaviour can also turn the situation around.

"The most important thing is to wear a mask — properly — over your nose and mouth. Remember that someone being your friend does not mean you don't have to wear a mask when you're with them. People seem to think the virus is associated with people who are 'other' — it can't be someone in my little circle of friends. We need to understand that the virus does not discriminate."

She also sees the need for the society "to understand how science works, how their bodies work. We need better science education, better general knowledge and literacy in general, and an education system that encourages critical thinking."

Both professors stressed that human beings' relationship to the environment was a significant factor that made us vulnerable to COVID-19 and other animal-borne pathogens.

"There is always the risk of infections from animals crossing to humans," Prof Carrington said, "but this is exacerbated by the way we live now: rapid global transportation, dense human populations, encroaching on forests, deforestation, rapid urbanisation. It sets up more frequent opportunities for animal viruses to enter the human population and then to spread rapidly and widely from person to person."

She warned, "there will be future 'matches'. We need to operate in a way that whatever happens, the sparks do not take hold and spread."

Prof Oura agreed: "We have to learn from our mistakes. The way we are dealing with nature and our planet, there is an increased chance of new viruses jumping from animals to humans. There have been more new viruses appearing in the last 30 years than before and this is directly due to the way humans are abusing the planet that they live on. It is critical to understand that we only have one planet, so we need to take care of it — there is no planet B."

He advocated for the adoption of a "One Health" approach, defined by "finding sustainable solutions to interconnected health problems involving people, animals, and the environment through partnerships and cooperation across sectors."

Looking to the future, both experts are hopeful for a vaccine and both indicated that they would have no hesitation in being vaccinated.

"I would absolutely, definitely take the vaccine," Prof Oura said, "once it's gone through the relevant regulators and clinical trials, and is proven to be safe and at least partially effective. I would be first in the queue and have my kids take the vaccine as well."

In her optimism however, Prof Carrington said adherence to the "new normal" would eventually bear fruit:

"People need to recognise that all the current are in an effort to get us back as close as possible to how we were before. But the way humans operated (before) is what facilitated disease emergence and pandemic spread in the first place."

She added, "We can't go back to exactly the same thing or the result will be the same. We have to evolve. If we want that evolution to include close interactions with our friends and families and being able to hug people and shake their hands, we need to do the hard work now."

■ CAMPUS NEWS

UWI Society of Petroleum Engineers Student Chapter wins Prestigious Presidential Award

The UWI Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Student Chapter has been selected by Society of Petroleum Engineers International (SPEI) to receive the Presidential Award for Outstanding Student Chapter 2020. This prestigious award is the organisation's highest honor, recognising only the top 5 per cent of SPEI student chapters around the world, and this is UWI SPE's first time winning the award.

The Presidential Award is given to student chapters with exceptional programmes in industry engagement, operations and planning, community involvement, professional development, and innovation. All 2020 Outstanding Student Chapter recipients will be recognised in October 2020 at SPEI's Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition (ATCE) in Houston, Texas, USA.

This recognition is one of several given to the student chapter based at UWI St Augustine. In 2019, they won the SPEI Student Chapter Excellence Award, the second highest honour a student chapter may receive. In July 2020, The UWI SPE Student Chapter PetroBowl Team placed 3rd in the SPE Latin America and Caribbean Regional PetroBowl Competition and qualified to take part in the SPE International PetroBowl competition to be held in Houston in October. Eighteen universities from nine countries in Latin America and Caribbean took part in this competition. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PetroBowl competition was held virtually for the first time.

The UWI SPE Student Chapter is made up of students with a focus or interest in petroleum engineering. The chapter's faculty advisor is Professor Raffie Hosein, Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering and Professor of Petroleum Engineering.

Established in the early 1900s, the Society of Petroleum Engineers today is an independent, nonprofit global organisation with more than 153,000 members in 143 countries. They manage key petroleum industry resources such as OnePetro and PetroWiki, in addition to publishing magazines, books and peer-reviewed journals. SPE hosts more than 100 conferences, workshops, and other events each year around the world.



ABOVE: The UWI SPE Student Chapter Officers 2019/20: (From Left) Secretary Danielle Pacheco, President Ahilia Gajadhar, Treasurer Rishma Persad, Vice President Celine Gooljar, Faculty Advisor Professor Raffie Hosein, Communications Chairperson Aliyah Ali, Membership Chairperson Navin Ragoo, and Programme Chairperson Lauren Rodrigues. Not included in the photo is Social Activities Chairperson Deana-Marie Burkett.



LEFT: Members of the Student Chapter with the San Fernando District Sea Scouts at an "Energy4Me" event held in South Trinidad. Energy4Me is an educational programme created by the Society of Professional Engineers to teach young people about energy sources, technology and sustainability.

UWI STUDENTS INTERN AT FIRST CITIZENS

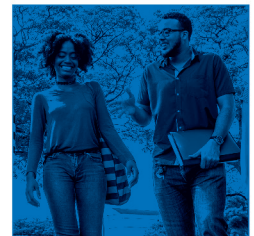
In July 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, First Citizens welcomed its fourth cohort of UWI St Augustine interns. The 22 students from the Faculties of Social Science and Science and Technology joined the First Citizens Group for a six-week paid internship, where they were given relevant, real-world experience for their career paths. The programme ended in August with students sharing the results of their work and learning, and gave their impressions of First Citizens. Developed in 2017, the First Citizens UWI Intern programme was created to form a bridge between the corporate world and higher education. It gives students a rare opportunity to apply their training in a real business environment.



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■ OUR STUDENTS



“Make students the heart of what we do”

An interview with Programme Coordinator Jarell Alder
on the new era of the university experience

BY ADUKE WILLIAMS

Over the last few months the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) has had to rapidly transition operations to a virtual format to match the current environment while still meeting the needs of students. During this transition a “new era” of sorts has been created for student programming at UWI St Augustine that embraces a dynamic and comprehensive virtual environment and enhances the student experience during these uncertain times.

UWI TODAY had a chance to discuss this new era of student programming with Jarell Alder, Programme Coordinator in the Office of the Director, DSSD.

UT: What is student programming and what does this look like at our campus?

JA: Student programming in higher education largely describes the multidisciplinary offerings that share the mission of enhancing student life and promoting student development. Student services professionals refer to student programming as the suite of initiatives, activities, events, attractions and experiential opportunities that provide our student population with a fully integrated, holistic educational experience. Our offerings are anchored by the eight dimensions of wellness, are student focused in both design and delivery and ultimately empowers our students during their time at the university in exemplifying the attributes of The Distinctive UWI Graduate.

UT: How has student programming been affected by COVID-19 and how is it likely to function at our campus in the upcoming academic year?

JA: The COVID 19 outbreak has presented a considerable number of challenges to the traditional ways of administering student programming; particularly our efforts at using initiatives to “humanise” the student experience and facilitate out-of-classroom

learning using in person delivery. While we have seen the positive impacts of engaging our students through this particular model over time, we have now identified a valuable opportunity to develop a vibrant and actively engaged online student community that will ensure that our student population is not merely surviving but thriving, staying connected, receiving support and feeling a sense of belonging.

In the upcoming academic year, we are planning to deliver new virtual programming that incorporates themes such as health and wellbeing; skill-based learning; and arts, culture and entertainment. Student retention and engagement is also one of our main objectives and to support this we are prepared to connect with students across unconventional platforms, solicit their feedback on a continuous basis and embark on investigative research that will help us in understanding the evolving needs of our students and offering effective interventions.

UT: What can new and returning students look forward to in the upcoming semesters and beyond?

JA: Our team is adopting a strategic design thinking approach to student programming which combines creative and critical thinking. Our new students can look forward to sustained orientation support through the various stages of transition to university life. Through the First Year Experience (FYE) programme they will be engaged in activities that promote self-efficacy while facilitating academic preparedness, transition progress, personal/social integration and the fostering of a genuine connection to their new university family.

Our returning students can look forward to increased engagement via virtual activities that promote personal and professional

development. They will become part of an online community that connects them with their peers and enriches the student experience.

UT: What are some key considerations for higher education institution personnel wanting to advance their student programming?

JA: I believe a mindset shift is fundamental so that we understand that innovation is required to give us the competitive advantage we desire from student programming. We need to align our offerings with the campus’ digital transformation thrust. We should make our end users (students) the heart of what we do. We have to seek to understand their needs, challenge our assumptions/norms and redefine problems to identify alternative strategies and solutions. We must Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test as an iterative process.

UT: What is the takeaway from all of this?

JA: A transformational change has occurred within our university environment and while many challenges have been presented, so too have opportunities. The perspective we have going forward is critical as it will affect how we function and how we see our reality. Some factors may have changed in student programming but our commitment to delivering transformational change, intervention and experiential opportunities across the student lifecycle, remains steadfast. The student culture, student experience and the success of our students going forward remains a campus wide responsibility and whatever our area of expertise we should challenge ourselves to identify the opportunities within our present circumstances and continue to explore strategies that will live up to our campus’ student centeredness promise.

Malaika Dedier to represent TSATT in Russian volunteer programme

BY NICKOLAI MADRAY



“The main purpose of volunteering is to help people, and that is the reason I got into volunteering, to help people,” says 21-year-old national footballer and UWI Geomatics Engineering student Malaika Dedier.

In February of this year, Malaika - who has played for Trinidad and Tobago

as the goalkeeper for the under 15, under 17 and under 20 teams - was chosen to represent T&T at the *Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire* (FISU) Volunteer Leaders Academy (FVLA) in Russia.

A highly accomplished student athlete, this young woman from East Trinidad was the captain of her high school football team, athlete of the year for Bishops Anstey High School East and Trinity College East (BATCE), a church youth leader and

co-captain of the St Augustine team that won first place at the UWI Games in Mona, Jamaica. She has been a consistent member of national teams since her early teens and has trained with the senior national team.

The FISU was founded in 1949 and is the sole recognised governing body for International University Sport. The FVLA is an educational event that serves as a key part of the international sports and volunteering movement.

Malaika was chosen by the Tertiary Sport Association of Trinidad and Tobago (TSATT), the local representative for FISU. TSATT selected her after a competitive interview process and her outstanding record as a national sports person.

“Ecstatic and elated!” was how she described her emotions upon being selected. “I was extremely excited because it is a great opportunity.”

Malaika first heard about the programme when she was nominated by her football instructor and the head coach of The UWI St Augustine women’s team, Jenelle Noel. However, she was already a seasoned volunteer. Malaika started volunteering in secondary school while a student at Bishops Anstey High School East.

The programme is geared towards training individuals through various sessions. At the FVLA, emerging sport

management leaders receive an intensive offering that includes lectures, roundtable discussions and networking opportunities. Academy attendees are also given “behind-the-house” experiences at many sports facilities used for top level events. The aim of the FISU Volunteer Leaders Academy is to create a volunteering community around the world that can share the best global practices in volunteer projects for various types of sports events.

“My main goal is to impart the knowledge gained from this academy unto others so they can in-turn share this knowledge throughout the world. This should increase the number of people learning about university sports, ways to be healthy and [how] to live a balanced lifestyle.”

Originally, the event was scheduled for June 2020 in Kazan, Russia. However, because of the COVID-29 pandemic the programme has moved to the virtual space. Participants took part in a preliminary on-line session in June and began the full programme in the first week of September.

After the programme, Malaika will be working alongside TSATT to promote volunteering. This includes planning and executing two university sporting events.

“I want to put on two quality events that will encourage others to become volunteers. I am sure it will be a great experience,” she says.

■ OUR PEOPLE

“Campus community” - it’s a handy phrase, a brisk bit of alliteration to describe the people that make up UWI St Augustine. It’s also very accurate. A campus is a community. It has parks, offices, police, places to eat, and even places to live. Some 18,000 students and 3,000 staff live and work on the St Augustine Campus, and many of them never think about what goes into keeping their community running, who is responsible for ensuring community life. One of the most senior at the helm of ensuring that the community thrives is the Campus Registrar.

“The modern registrar is the chief operating officer of the institution,” says Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill, Campus Registrar of UWI St Augustine. She is the first woman appointed to the position in the history of the campus.

This past July she celebrated her first year in the post, having acted as Deputy Campus Registrar before her official appointment in 2019. And what a year it’s been. She came on during a time of great upheaval at the Caribbean institution as it has been dealing with financial pressures brought on by weakening regional economies and greater competition from other schools. Then came the coronavirus pandemic.

“We had to change so rapidly,” she says. “I came into the office with a clear vision and roadmap for change, and all these plans and ideas have been interrupted because of COVID-19.”

But part of leadership is adaptation, and working with her colleagues in the campus management team, the deans and their faculties, the campus’ support and technical staff, Dr De Four-Gill’s first year, while not easy, has been one of rapid evolution for the benefit of UWI St Augustine.

Life on Campus

Long before she was a campus administrator, De Four-Gill was a UWI student:

“UWI has been so much a part of my life. I did my first degree here. I started to work here after my second degree.”

She muses on her trajectory, “I think I was a late bloomer. I did well through primary and secondary school but I really started to peak in university.”

After UWI, she received a Chevening Scholarship for her to do a master’s degree in Marketing at the CASS Business School at City University in London. Marketing would soon bring her back to the St Augustine Campus, where she would make an impact that still resonates powerfully today.

“I was always interested in strategy and I understood the underpinning role of marketing. I wanted to bring it all together in a holistic way,” she says.

For many years, Dr De Four-Gill was the Director of the Marketing and Communications Office (M&C), a unit she developed with the support of Campus Principals Professor Compton Bourne and Dr Bhoendradatt Tewarie, and, initially, a very small staff.

“I always had a good mentor and supporter in the form of Prof Bourne,” she says. “He believed that we had to do things a little differently. He had a vision, so I started working with him directly in the area of marketing and relationship building. It just grew from there. When Dr Tewarie came on, he too had a similar vision and gave me the room to help him implement it, and so a full-fledged marketing and communications unit was formed.”

By “full-fledged” she means three or four people. It was an overwhelming workload. They did everything - edited all campus publications, handled campus messaging, managed photo shoots, and even handled outreach and student recruitment events.”

She looks back and laughs, “You really had to be young to take it on. It required a level of sacrifice that when I look back on it now, I don’t know if I could do it again.”

But the sacrifice paid off. M&C has become a multiple international award-winning, fully integrated part of campus operations, and the marketing function has grown and spread across the other UWI campuses (UWI TODAY is produced by M&C). It also showed not only De Four-Gill’s capacity for work, but her willingness to go where others had not ventured and her ability to endure the uncertainty and hardships to make it work. These are character assets for a senior administrator, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Swift response

In March 2020, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago ordered a temporary lockdown of schools. As the perils related to the coronavirus became clearer, the lockdown order was extended. UWI St Augustine closed the campus shortly after - during the second semester of the academic year.

“We had to go into emergency mode and try to retrofit,” says Dr De Four-Gill. “We had to take all our processes to support

Madame Registrar

Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill, first woman to hold the post of Campus Registrar at UWI St Augustine as Higher Ed enters an era of change

BY JOEL HENRY

Dr Dawn-Marie De Four-Gill
Campus Registrar of UWI St Augustine



students in a face-to-face environment and find a way to deliver that same level of support in a digital environment.”

In areas like communications, online lectures and even coursework, this was laborious but not extremely difficult. However, the examinations process (student assessments) was both time-consuming and challenging work. Faculties and lecturers had to convert exams to an alternative assessment mode, and the administration had to convert their support processes to match.

“The public only sees the part where you go to a space and take exams, but a lot goes into that behind the scenes,” she says. “We were clear that we couldn’t do fully online exams because we didn’t want to disadvantage any students. Quite a number of students don’t have access to electronic devices.”

They settled on a format that would replace the standard, in-person two-hour exams, with online assessments ranging from 24 hours, to 48 hours, to five days. Not only was it a new system, it was a system that had to be implemented in the space of three weeks instead of the typical eight-week exam timetable construction.

And while the result wasn’t perfect, it worked, she says: “We knew we would have fallouts and clashes, etc, and we were prepared to deal with that. We had to.”

As Campus Registrar, Dr De Four-Gill has been involved in almost every aspect of the COVID-19 response - facilities management, student support, health and safety measures, everything. She has come through the experience with many positive takeaways, despite the challenges. The many hours-long meetings have brought her closer to her campus colleagues. The sharing of information with other universities has strengthened her network with international higher education providers. The roadblocks and inefficiencies she has discovered in the campus’ operations have given her useful information on what needs to be improved.

Perhaps most importantly, the realities of university life post-COVID-19 have made her and other higher ed professionals look deeply at what it means to be part of a tertiary level institution and how campuses can evolve to match.

It’s an empowering outlook, one she credits to the influence of her family, “I have had strong family support throughout my life.”

Dr De Four-Gill grew up primarily with her single mother

and sister, with the additional influence of extended family like her grandfather.

“My mom is an incredible inspiration for me,” she says. “And I am terribly proud of my sister. One of my drivers is for them to be proud of me.”

Dr De Four-Gill recalls her mother hosting fundraising activities like barbecues so that she could afford to live in the UK while pursuing her master’s degree. “Something she willingly and generously repeated when my sister did her masters in the UK,” she says.

She also has a family of her own, a husband and two sons. She speaks at length about them:

“When I was pursuing my doctorate [in Higher Education Leadership and Management from the University of Pennsylvania] my husband, understanding the tremendous pressure it would mean for me and our family, took over the running of the house. He was selfless. He left his job and worked from home. He did everything.”

Of her two sons, 18 and 13, she says, they keep her grounded: “I’m still a mom. I might wake up early in the morning to meditate and prepare for work, but I also have to prepare breakfast and lunch, sync schedules and get them all out of the house on time. My family is very, very important to me.”

Important as well, is what she represents for professional women and women in academia. She mentions the several mentors she has had at the university and many of them are women. She also draws upon a treasured resource of support from her female colleagues at UWI. She hopes to inspire as she has been inspired.

“I want people to understand that their circumstances don’t determine who they are and that you can do anything with determination and hard work. I want them to know that it’s ok to be a strong woman. However, being strong does not mean doing it alone. I have benefited from the support of so many. They have contributed to my success and to my well-being. It’s ok to not want to have to do it all on your own,” she says.

And of the experience as Campus Registrar? She laughs, “it’s been an interesting journey so far. I look forward to what we need to do over the next year.”

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

During and after the recent election campaign in Trinidad and Tobago, hostile messages with racist overtones proliferated the physical and virtual spaces of the nation.

To address these enduring underlying race issues, The UWI's Faculty of Law in collaboration with the Catholic Commission for Social Justice hosted a virtual National Symposium on August 30 entitled *A Time for Healing - Understanding and Reconciling Race Relations in Trinidad and Tobago*. Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Dean of the Law Faculty, noted that public education on race was contemplated even before the election, but the election and a subsequent approach from CCSJ provided a timely opportunity to engage. She reminded that the UWI, as emphasised by Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles and St Augustine Campus Principal Professor Brian Copeland, must be activist and centred in the community. Antoine saw the symposium as positioning The UWI as a facilitator of national discourse for the public good and a thought leader, using research and analysis as key tools.

Colonial Inheritance of Inequality

"Elections and the post-election period are particularly difficult times for us," said the featured speaker, sociologist Rhoda Reddock, Emerita Professor and former Deputy-Principal of UWI St Augustine. She said this was "a symptom of living in a racially polarised, post-colonial society".

The symposium brought together panelists from academia, law, politics, the media, the arts, labour and youth. CCSJ Chair, Leela Ramdeen moderated the event which opened with prayer from representatives of various faiths. Justice Donna Prowell-Raphael, Judge of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, explained its scope and jurisprudence on race discrimination.

Prof Reddock, also a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, said that the election's racist overtones were predicated on two specific stereotypical narratives: that citizens of African descent are at the bottom of the economic pile and citizens of Indian descent receive certain privileges which allow them to progress. Compounding these are perceptions that Afro-Trinbagonians hold the political and cultural hegemony, while Indo-Trinbagonians capitalise on their economic hegemony.

Race relations in Trinidad and Tobago began with the near decimation of First Peoples, the enslavement of Africans, and then the immigration of indentured Indians. Subsequently, other non-European groups were introduced into an already racialised, colour-coded hierarchical structure. In pluralistic, polarised societies like Trinidad and Tobago, the stereotypes and dangerous myths generate little real understanding of the complex historical, socio-economic and cultural forces underpinning the country, she said. She observed that the election provoked "outrage" by middle-class Afro-Trinbagonians about images of Afro-descendant victimhood, but "many forgot that it was Afro-descendants themselves who were responsible for the myth of Afro-descendant victimhood" and "it was okay for Afro-Trinbadians to criticise their own."

She continued: "The power of myths and stereotypes encompass aspects of truth... but they need to be challenged if we are to bring ourselves back from where we have arrived." For example, she rebutted the much repeated myth that only Indians got land after emancipation. Historical evidence shows that Afro-descendant groups, including the Merikens,



Paintings of multiracial T&T by artist Jackie Hinkson.

LOSING RACE

After bitter election, national symposium ponders, promotes healing

BY VISHANI RAGOBEER

demilitarised soldiers and squatters did as well, and Indian land was given instead of promised repatriation grants.

Trade Unionist David Abdullah agreed that the colonial legacy encompassed a myriad of systemic issues, impacting the capitalist economic system. He warned that we must all fight "to humanise" our "geographic space", while decrying the hierarchy that oppressed, non-white racial groups continue to bear.

Professor Antoine, former Rapporteur for Afro-descendants and Against Discrimination, Organisation of American States, focused on hidden forms of racism and discrimination in law. She highlighted existing indirect/structural discrimination and systemic racism, especially in relation to economic, social and cultural rights like education, employment and health. She identified an unequal society exacerbating discrimination; and racism fueling inequality, citing intersectionality when different forms of discrimination interact with class and poverty.

Prof Antoine warned that the law does not require intention to discriminate, but can intervene if the result is disproportionately adverse to an ethnic group. She suggested meritocracy as a potential mechanism for redress, despite meritocracy being challenged by the inability of all groups to

compete equally (eg education) and a recognition that there is more than one historically oppressed people. Innovative constructs must be found that focus on desirable outcomes.

She concluded: "If we are committed to equality among every creed and race, we must go beyond the surface and challenge the status quo, to confront these destructive, hidden racialised patterns and stereotypes."

Political Discourse a Symptom

Mr Kwasi Mutema, Chair of the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), contended that the racial tension which exists between Indo and Afro-Trinbagonians is a politically manufactured one, influenced by the colonial "white power structure" in the Caribbean. This tension is introduced and perpetuated to prevent Afro and Indo-Trinbadian unity and to ensure that political and economic power continue to be wielded by the few. This accounts for why racism, primarily between these two groups, is overtly manifested during the national elections.

Chairman of the Council for Responsible Political Behaviour Dr Bishnu Ragoonath, highlighted that two major political parties have engaged in racist rhetoric and race-baiting and have largely avoided responsibility for these



divisive actions. He advocated for greater responsibility from political leaders and their parties, and greater respect for each other.

Dr Raymond Ramcharitar, writer and cultural historian, focused on anti-Indian racism, saying it was “built into the state and has been from the 19th century”. He criticised a post-colonial power structure made up of “creole citizens” (European, African and mixed race persons) who have, he said, treated Indians like outsiders and subjected them to “a stream of racist rhetoric” from the press, leading creole citizens and institutions. He compared the experiences of Indo-Trinidadians to African-Americans who have succeeded despite great discrimination. In a perhaps discordant note, but in the spirit of the legitimacy of free academic discourse, he pointed directly to the governing People’s National Movement (PNM) as the body that promotes the interest of this creole group which seeks to exclude Indo-Trinidadians.

Prof Reddock explained that the notions of “oppressor” and “victims” are no longer “black and white” in our post-colonial, multiracial society, obscuring who is the oppressed and the oppressor. Accordingly, the narratives of suffering and sacrifice become mechanisms through which nationalist ethnic mobilisation is manufactured, strengthening feelings of solidarity and community. This, she says, creates a much higher potential for conflict.

Language

Language plays a central role in understanding the dynamics of race relations, said Dr Sheila Rampersad, journalist. Traditional race insults (the use of the “n-word” and the “c-word” to refer to Indo and Afro-Trinidadians, for example) may no longer be perceived as malicious, but terms of endearment. However, she questioned whether this is true, or whether people have become desensitised to the negative connotations of these words.

She suggested that Trinidadians view themselves as racial, not racist. The former is a neutral, but layered term, and its use indicates that Trinidadians view their racism as a milder version of what occurs in “racist” societies. This, she reasoned, may be indicative of a lack of understanding about racism.

“We define many things as racist that are not, in fact, racist,” she said. “To merely speak the words marginalisation, alienation, discrimination, is to sometimes be racist. Trying to express feelings of disadvantage is to be racist. To be conscious about your ethnic ancestry is also automatically labelled racist.”

Ruqayyah Scott, youth activist and UWI student, drew attention to the struggles of biracial people who must contend with being neither “African enough” nor “Indian enough”. She urged that conversations about race relations should not be confined to the experiences of Indo and Afro-Trinidadians, but rather, should consider a wider scope reflective of the issues of multiracial T&T.

UWI Clinical psychologist Dr Katija Khan, provided strategies for greater inclusion. It is not enough for citizens to *not* be racist, she said, they must be actively anti-racist to combat racism. She proffered that safe spaces for honest and candid discussions, more research, political watchdogs and a reexamination of the education curriculum are needed. She echoed Prof Antoine’s warning of indirect race discrimination, which requires sensitisation if we are to address it in concrete ways.

An innovative feature of the symposium was the use of a web-portal on the Faculty’s webpage which allowed members of the public to share their experiences of racism to promote understanding. Some of these testimonials were read, demonstrating that feelings of exclusion and discrimination existed across a wide spectrum of peoples and there was a need for healing.

Participants were also treated to contributions from leading artists, whom Prof Antoine described as the “conscience of the nation”. They echoed the need for unity. Novelist, Earl Lovelace read from his work *Salt*, reminding participants of “what it is to be human” [race]. Artist Jackie Hinkson shared paintings showing multicultural images of Trinidad and Tobago. Musical notes of Chinese, African, and Indian origin; pan; and a calaloo of the above, also filled the healing space.

The symposium attracted over 31,000 hits and lively debate on Facebook. There was consensus that honesty and empathy were needed and that the nation needed to move forward in unity.

UWI IN SOCIETY

Framing anti-blackness and racism

Students weigh-in on the issues and solutions

BY VISHANI RAGOBEER

“Racism is not an extraordinary event in a racist society, it takes the form of everyday violence, everyday oppression,” said Amílcar Sanatan.

Sanatan, a PhD candidate, is an instructor within the Department of Geography at UWI St Augustine. He is also a creative, activist, and student leader. Though he wears many caps, his conviction informs all of them. Sanatan believes the struggle for racial justice is not borrowed from the US, just as it is not unique to the Caribbean. It is a global struggle.

He was speaking at an online event hosted by the National Affairs Committee (NAC) of the Students’ Guild Council and the UWI African Society titled *Emancipation Matters: A Virtual Discussion on African Identity*. The discussion was held on July 30 in commemoration of the 182nd Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in the Caribbean.

Underpinning this struggle, Sanatan explained, is the racist, sexist and capitalist economies that seem to thrive on the organisation and perpetuation of these less-than-desirable tenets. This is the same in the US, where George Floyd was killed as it is in Trinidad and Tobago, where young men in East Port of Spain are heavily policed.

“Police violence exists in Trinidad and Tobago, like in Belize, Guyana, Haiti, and Suriname,” he reminded the online audience, adding that this violence is class-based and working-class people have less hope for recourse as they have fewer resources to get justice.

But racism is not only manifested through police violence. It is also expressed through inequality and those trapped in poverty, the “*Les damnés* of development”, Sanatan said. Racism is exhibited as well, he pointed out, in the policing of black bodies, the urge to create distance from what is black, and to find safety in closer proximity to what is white.

And while there is the prevailing romanticised notion of the Caribbean as a racially harmonious place, replete with just “irie vibes”, Sanatan said that Caribbean historians continue to examine the racial, economic and sexual exploitation in regional society.

The social setting he described is one where the humanity of Caribbean people has always been under attack as white supremacy was propagated and profits from the land were extracted for metropolitan countries. It began when explorers “savaged” indigenous people and culture, enslaved Africans, established systems of Indian indentured servitude, and birthed a lasting inequitable system. This was the colonial order which continues to constrict today’s Caribbean, Sanatan described.

His sentiments were similar to other students grappling with the region’s legacy of anti-blackness and racism, as well their heritage and identity. They shared their views during the virtual discussion.

“We all have a right to connect back with our heritage and history,” said Nkese Charles, a student from

UWI St Augustine’s Faculty of Medical Sciences. “There was (an) Africa before slavery and before colonialism, and I want us to become more aware of that Africa.”

She stressed however that being “pro-black” is not an indication of being “anti-anything” – except anti-racist.

Nathanael John, a Psychology major from the Faculty of Social Sciences and former member of the Student Guild, argued that archaic laws and discriminatory norms and policies have to be changed to unearth and remove entrenched racism.

Poet and activist Ashlee Burnett focused on the sexualisation of Black men and women during enslavement and how those harmful practices then have morphed into damaging stereotypes and prejudices today. She spoke out against the policing of black bodies, the portrayal of the “angry black woman”, and the representation (or lack thereof) of Afro-Caribbean people.

“I hold the view that proper education and truly understanding history are the keys to helping people in the Caribbean unlearn their racist behaviours and put an end to segregation,” said Chrisette Benjamin, an International Relations and Social Policy Planning student. She advocates for individuals to become more empathetic and accepting of each other.

Emancipation Day is celebrated on August 1 to commemorate the end of slavery in the British colonies in 1838. This year’s celebration took on added significance with the international protests following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minnesota, USA. The National Affairs Committee of the Student’s Guild is responsible for the cultural affairs, safety and security, community outreach and social awareness on behalf of the students of UWI St Augustine.

EMANCIPATION MATTERS

A virtual discussion on African Identity in the 21st Century.

f LIVE @ uwistaguild

Thursday 30th July 5pm-6:30pm

Nathanael John, Ashlee Burnett, Amílcar Sanatan, Nkese Charles, Chrisette Benjamin

THE NATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, UWI ST AUGUSTINE STUDENTS' GUILD, AFRIKAN SOCIETY

Vishani Ragobeer is a journalist from Guyana and a first year student of Leadership and Management. She is the winner of the 2018/2019 Young Journalist of the Year award.

■ OUR PEOPLE

In a small village in Garth Road, Williamsville in South Trinidad, a young girl would develop a fascination with the mysterious oceans that surround us, and what creatures live below their watery depths.

With yearly vacations to the sprawling beaches of Mayaro, Professor Judith Gobin fell in love with our coastal environments— a path that would lead her to become a celebrated marine biologist (the only Caribbean person and scientist from The UWI to ever be appointed to global advisory boards for the DEEP Ocean Stewardship Initiative and the REV Ocean Science and Innovation Committee); and to break the glass ceiling as the first female Professor of Science at the St Augustine Campus (appointed in June of this year). Oh, and she also happens to be the Head of the Department of Life Sciences in the Faculty of Science and Technology.

Professor Gobin has many roles as a teacher, a leader, and a scientist— but the ocean holds her heart. Her research into the marine world spans over 38 years, and she has added a huge swathe of knowledge to the study of Marine Biodiversity in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean.

One of the most interesting parts of this research?

“You get to discover new species of organisms... and you get to name them!” says Professor Gobin.

She has published scientific records on approximately 298 new marine species found in Caribbean waters. She started off looking into soft coastal marine sediments, then rocky shores, and then the most mysterious of all— deep-sea areas. As Professor Gobin describes it, “there is a yet undiscovered world here and we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. The deep sea is the last frontier and one of the most exciting environments to work in!”

But Professor Gobin’s interest in our oceans is not purely academic. It is also a matter of protecting and in some cases rehabilitating the natural world around us.

“Scientific research can provide solutions to many environmental, social and economic problems,” she says. And much of her work, both locally and on the international stage, has been aligned to this idea of using scientific research to address the issues of conservation, sustainability and responsible stewardship of our marine environments.

One of her many projects of this nature is her participation in international discussions headed by the United Nations to create an international, legally binding, instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Professor Gobin says, “Due to the global recognition for my marine biodiversity research, I have been invited by a number of organisations to be present and be a scientific partner in this global event.”

She has been participating in this process since 2016.

The traditionally male dominated fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) have long suffered from a limited perspective that can lead to blind spots in research and information, as well as more difficulty for women and other minority groups to excel and be heard. But gradually, the makeup of these fields has been changing, thanks to scientists like Professor Gobin.

“There are various STEM opportunities (other than medicine and engineering) that are fulfilling, interesting, and of real-world value— to respond and solve problems,” she says. These problems require minds from all walks of life to give the fullest picture of what needs to be done.

Especially, she points out, during the international crisis of COVID-19, the value of scientific research and global cooperation is more evident than ever:

“Science is central to our future. The COVID-19

Educator and Explorer

Prof Judith Gobin ventures into the depths of the sea and heights of academia

BY AMY LI BAKSH



Professor Judith Gobin

pandemic has highlighted this reality. The world is now focused on research scientists to provide a cure,” says Professor Gobin.

When we acquire more knowledge, we can be better prepared for – or even – prevent future crises. Luckily, interest in these types of fields is increasing. Zeroing in on marine biology/ecology, The UWI has a robust collection of students pursuing MSc, MPhil and PhD degrees in marine sciences and the Department of Life Sciences offers a minor in marine ecology.

Although Professor Gobin is passionate about the ocean, her favourite part of the job is her role as teacher. “Dealing with young people... young minds” is what she loves most about her work.

With her responsibilities as a teacher, parent, global advocate and head of department, Professor Gobin is still finding time to enjoy what she does. First on her list of qualities, a marine biologist must have “love [for] the sea” and it is clear that she has taken this to heart. Of course, that list also includes “long hours in the laboratory”, so it’s not all fun trips to the beach.

With just about 5 per cent of the Earth’s oceans already explored, there is so much more to be discovered in the watery world below us. Professor Gobin is ready to continue venturing into the unknown:

“We have been making strides in marine and environmental research. However, there is still much more to be done and I wish to make a personal appeal to all— the Government, industry and the private sector of Trinidad and Tobago— please channel more funds and resources into scientific research and STEM. It is where our future lies. And to all the young girls and women of Trinidad and Tobago— I cracked the ceiling and so can you!”

“Science is central to our future. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted this reality. The world is now focused on research scientists to provide a cure”

Professor Judith Gobin



RESEARCH



Dahryn A Augustine



Dr Grace-Anne Bent

Within three months of its discovery, COVID-19 became a global pandemic. At the time of this writing, the virus has a whopping death toll of over 828,000 lives lost. There are certain truths about this virus that cannot be denied. People with chronic conditions are at greater risk of having poor outcomes (ventilator use or death). These include: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, cancer, heart disease and lung disease. In Trinidad and Tobago, this trend was also observed, where pre-existing medical conditions were mentioned among the 17 (at the time of this writing) reported deaths. Even without the pandemic, diabetes, heart disease and cancer are among the leading causes of deaths in the country.

These medical conditions are closely linked to maintaining a “poor” diet, that is, one consisting of predominantly carbohydrate-rich foods such as French fries and conveniently prepared foods like roti, doubles and bake. Even more alarming are the toxic ingredients found in these foods, one of which is known as acrylamide.

Acrylamide is a cancer-causing substance which is formed when carbohydrate-rich foods are prepared at high temperatures (greater than 100 °C). These foods contain sugars such as glucose or fructose that interact with an amino acid known as asparagine at high temperatures, resulting in acrylamide formation. This process is known as the Maillard reaction, which is responsible for producing the brown colour, flavours, and aromas that make our food so appealing. However, the browner our food, the more intense the Maillard reaction. This means the greater the levels of acrylamide present. Fried, baked, or roasted foods that are browner and crispier, contain higher acrylamide levels than boiled foods.

The acrylamide content for many fast and conveniently prepared foods popularly eaten in the Caribbean have been assessed by food scientist Dr Grace-Anne Bent. Examples of these foods include fried potatoes, fried bake, roti skin, bread, cereal and coffee. They all contain moderate to high levels of acrylamide. This is in contrast to boiled foods which contain no or low acrylamide levels.

Data obtained from food imports and food service sales support the country's growing preference for refined carbohydrates instead of fresh fruits and vegetables (Figure 1).

Slow down on Fast Food

The link between food toxin, acrylamide and COVID-19 deaths

BY DAHRYN A AUGUSTINE
AND DR GRACE-ANNE BENT



This provides clues to the population's increasing acrylamide exposure. Some of the top foods imported into the country are coffee, wheat products, soybean oil and refined sugar (Figure 2). This is not surprising since many food items are made from some of these imported products. These foods contribute significantly to high levels of acrylamide in our diet. While 70 per cent of these imported foods move to retail outlets, 30 per cent can be found in food service sectors, including the international fast food franchise KFC, which has been rumoured to generate the most sales on the island. The number of fast food service outlets are increasing exponentially due to the growing labour force among the population, particularly women. Meanwhile, agricultural productivity remains low, contributing less than one per cent of the country's GDP.

So, what is the relationship between fast foods and COVID-19 deaths? When we eat fast foods they significantly increase our exposure to acrylamide. Once eaten, acrylamide lowers the body's internal levels of the key antioxidant glutathione (GSH). GSH serves as the body's natural detoxifier. GSH levels are quickly reduced when removing harmful substances such as acrylamide from the body. Once GSH levels are low, toxins begin to accumulate. This leads to a faster ageing process and chronic diseases that may result in poor outcomes for a COVID-19 patient.

Exposure to acrylamide can also compromise the immune system and with it the ability to combat COVID-19. Acrylamide lowers the number of immune defense cells that work to produce antibodies, kill viruses, control cell movement and develop antiviral functions. Without these defense cells, the body loses its ability to combat infections.

Since there may be a link between lifestyle diseases, acrylamide consumption, and poor COVID-19 outcomes, we encourage an improvement in eating habits. Our diet should include foods rich in proteins, fruits and vegetables. Currently, agricultural land in Trinidad and Tobago is being overtaken by urbanisation. We should strive to increase local production of fruits, vegetables and ground provision. This may be possible with government assistance and public education campaigns.

Additionally, cooking methods that require lower temperatures such as boiling, and eating fresh fruits and vegetables should be promoted. Not only will this aid in reducing our food importation bills, but will encourage healthier eating and make food more affordable. By reducing the consumption of processed, starchy foods, the exposure to dietary acrylamide will be reduced, thus enhancing immunity and the overall health and well-being of the population.

CARICOM FOOD IMPORT BILL - 2000, 2007, 2011 (US\$M)

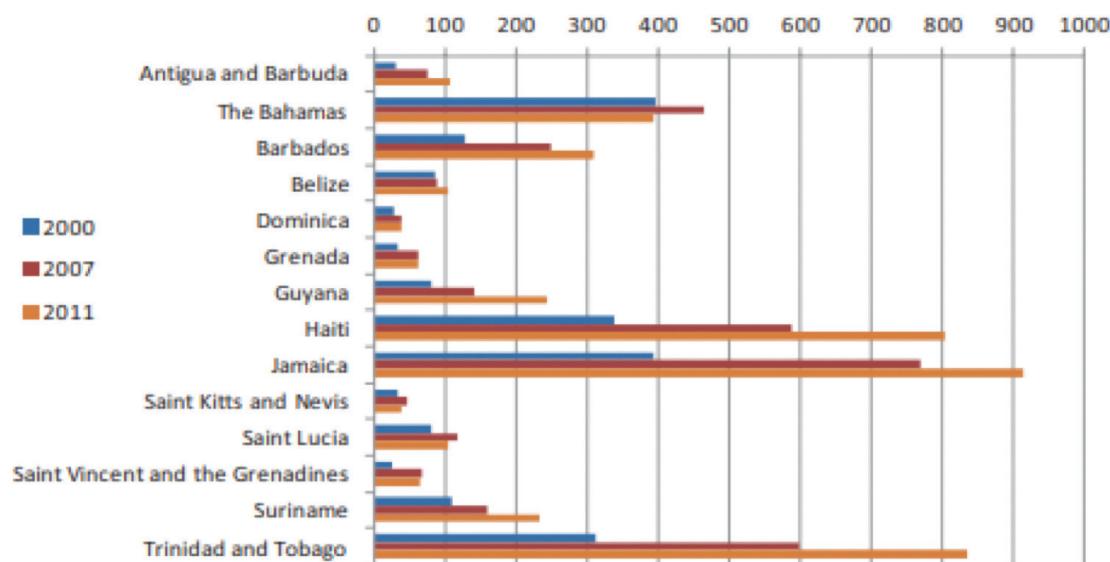


Figure 1: CARICOM's food importation bill from 2000-2011.
Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ax740e.pdf>

TOP TEN CARICOM AGRICULTURAL IMPORT ITEMS IN 2011 (US\$M)

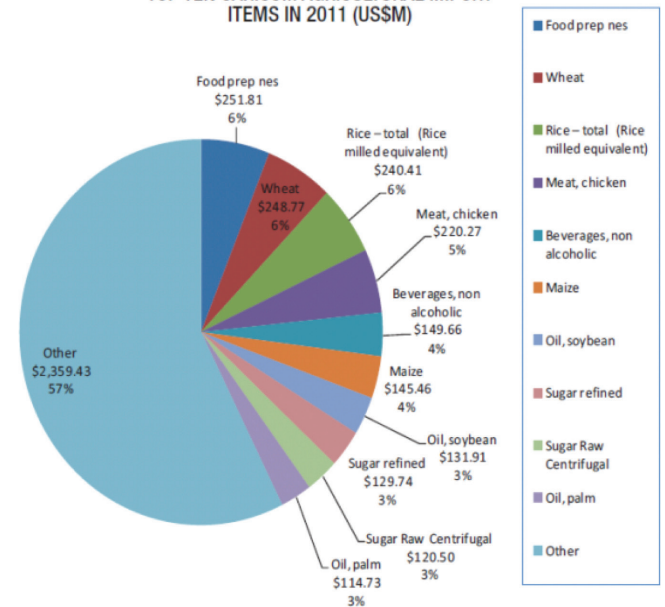


Figure 2: Top 10 CARICOM agricultural imports in 2011.
Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ax740e.pdf>

■ OUR STUDENTS

When Antonio Wallace picked up his first camera, just before entering his degree programme at The UWI, he didn't know that it would lead to him switching his focus from information technology to a BA in Film Production and Major Film Studies. And he certainly did not know he would be completing his final film project in the middle of a pandemic.

That didn't stop him or the team at the film programme from finding creative solutions to working in this crisis. Now, Antonio's passion for filmmaking is about to take him on another journey— studying documentary filmmaking in Europe, as part of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree scholarship programme (EMJMD).

"To complete work during COVID-19 was the hardest thing to do," says Antonio. As the team scrambled to adapt to the new normal, they had to change their script and find workarounds for editing the footage when they didn't have access to the film building. "There was real chaos trying to create a film during this time," he says. But they made it work.

According to Yao Ramesar, head of The UWI St Augustine film degree programme, this type of adaptive creativity is part of life as a filmmaker: "Filmmaking is about transcending practical challenges all the time... It is problem solving. What we had to do was an additional challenge, and it is not going to be easy, but nothing is. So we worked out how to complete this film during the pandemic, observing all the protocols."

The EMJMD programme is fiercely competitive, and thousands of students around the world apply for a space. Since 2005, almost 100 students from Trinidad and Tobago have been awarded the scholarship, a group which now includes Antonio. His work follows the trajectory of what Mr Ramesar has been trying to inculcate at the film programme— "We are taking very indigenous, local stories that have a universal theme."

For Antonio, the local stories he gravitates towards focus on our rich creative culture. "I'm interested in creating documentaries surrounding Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean... I'm interested in global stories, but also local like

With documentaries, he feels more able to get to the depth of truth, and to have important conversations about not just the mainstream aspects of our culture but its origins and the parts of our history that build what we have today.

Storytelling is at the core of what they do at the film programme, and part of this is acknowledging the responsibility that storytellers have to the rest of society. Antonio's work, and those of his fellow students, reflects this— tackling serious political and social issues like race, gender, culture and how they all factor into our postcolonial society.

His documentary, *A Creative Story*, talks about the art community and what it means to get into the arts. Part of his message is to follow your passion, even if it is in a field that might not be as well-supported in the Caribbean. "If you want to get into the arts, don't let anyone discourage you," he says.

Out of all of the artistic fields, film is the most collaborative. The communal aspect of the art form has fostered a family structure within the film programme, especially as classes tend to be on the smaller side.

"We were able to work in small groups, and everyone was close," he says. "It was like a family— you felt like you were home. I would have no class and I would want to go to the building just to relax and do work because it was so welcoming. The fact that it is a family, not just a learning institute, it makes the difference."

Because the industry requires so much collaboration to create a film, and because we have all grown up on the global mega-entertainment industries like Hollywood, getting into the art form can seem daunting. Overcoming that mental barrier is part of what Yao Ramesar and the programme hope to accomplish.

He says, "Part of what we try to do is demystify film... these things are more accessible than you think. You have to work very hard, and it has to be your life's work, but it is much more dependent on your input. Once you know what to do, you can reach anywhere with your story.... So we don't just show how to make films, but how to get them there, distribute and get them to exhibit."

Another part of this process is waiting. And this is where Antonio is now. With COVID-19 still very much an unfolding crisis, there is some uncertainty in the air. But if all goes well, he expects to be starting his new studies in early 2021, where he will have a chance to work with filmmakers in Portugal, Hungary and Belgium. In the meantime, he is continuing to find adaptive ways to make his art.

"I'm trying to create or film some documentaries while I'm home, and then I can edit afterwards," he says.

It's been a strange and exciting journey so far, and it's hard to say what new challenges will arise as Antonio and the new generation of filmmakers work out how to practice their craft at a time like this. But as Mr Ramesar says— "You have to love film, and sometimes, love hurts."

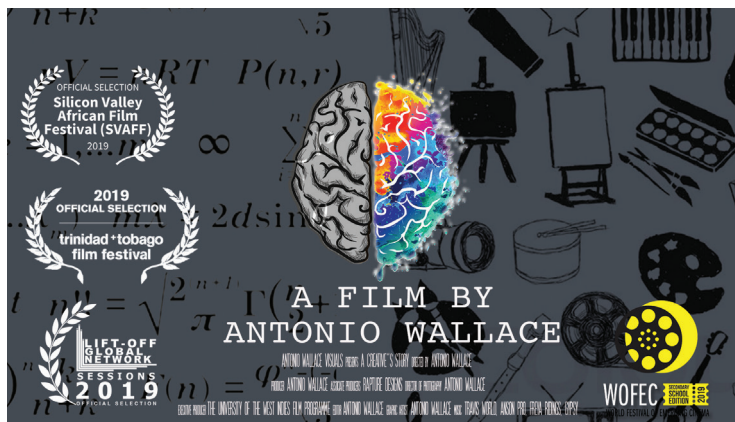
Making his Family Proud

Erasmus scholar Antonio Wallace soars with the support of UWI's close-knit Film Programme

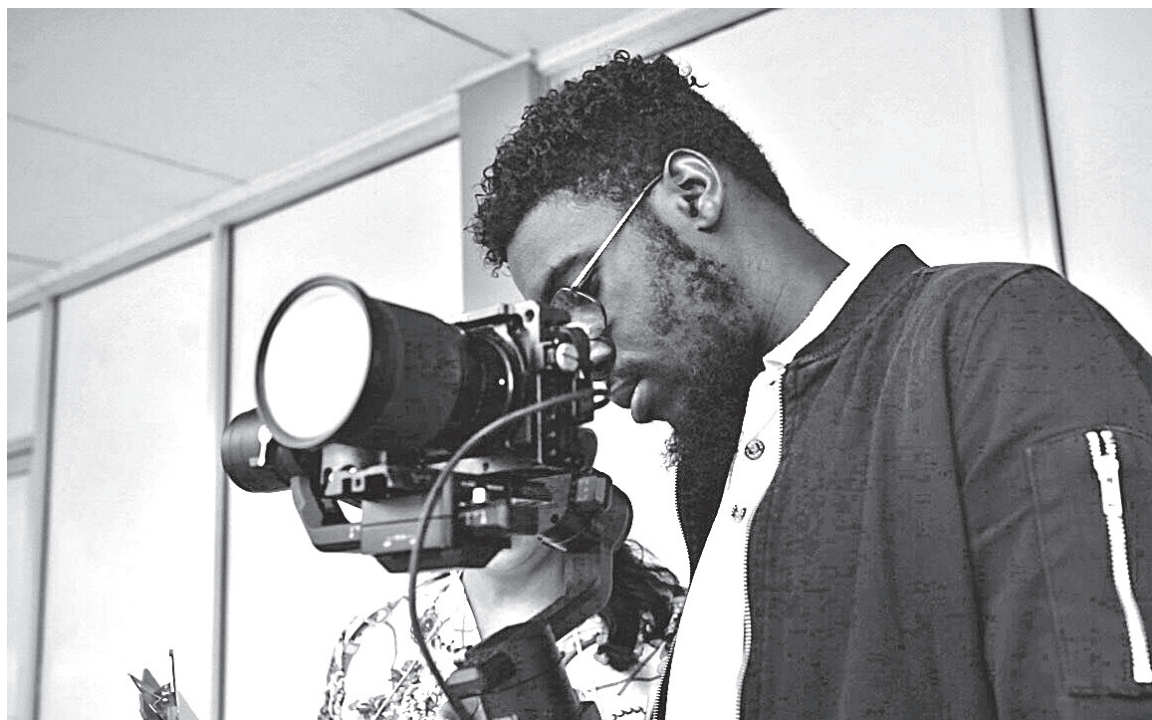
BY AMY LI BAKSH



Antonio Wallace



Yao Ramesar, filmmaker and head of the UWI St Augustine Film Programme.



■ VETERINARY MEDICINE

Everyone wants to keep their loved ones safe from SARS-COV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and pet-lovers are no exception.

Amid news of the virus playing havoc with human life around the world, reports have emerged of animal infections, most notably of pets.

To address the concerns of pet owners, The UWI School of Veterinary Medicine within the Faculty of Medical Sciences, hosted a webinar on July 28 entitled *Animal Lovers and COVID-19: What You Need to Know*.

Co-moderated by Large Animal Medicine lecturers Dr Anil Persad and Dr Marc Driscoll, the online discussion featured presentations from faculty lecturers such as Professor Christopher Oura (Veterinary Virology) and Dr Lisa Benjamin (Veterinary Public Health).

Dr Benjamin stressed that fewer than 100 animals worldwide have tested positive for the new coronavirus, and that in the main, transmission is from person to person.

However, two big cats at the Bronx Zoo, animals at two mink farms, and several cats and dogs have been infected — although their symptoms are mild.

So how do you know if your pet may have COVID-19?

Dr Benjamin said the symptoms are similar to those that present in human beings: fever and respiratory indicators like sneezing, coughing and shortness of breath, and gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea.

She said if a pet is suspected of having the infection, “the vet should be consulted so he or she can diagnose the cause of your pet’s illness by a process of elimination” noting that the test for coronavirus is expensive and thus “routine testing is not recommended”. She added that so far, the direction of transmission to pets has been from human to animal.

Dr Benjamin said tests have shown that “chickens, pigs, mice and ducks are not readily infected, but ferrets are very susceptible” and will be used in lab studies.

She cautioned: “Cats may get infected more readily than dogs and spread from one cat to another.”

Dogs and cats can get infected if someone in the household has the disease.

To protect your pet from exposure, she advised: “Wear masks when dealing with animals” when a person is suspected of having the virus.

When walking your dog, Dr Benjamin recommends:

- Use a leash
 - Practice social distancing — stay six feet away from others, and do not go to crowded areas
 - Do not place face coverings or masks on your dog
- “Restrict the movement of your pet,” she said. “You don’t want your pet to come into contact with infected people.”

She advises that vets, pet shops and people who board pets should develop written biosafety and biosecurity protocols for their facilities, for example, how often they will clean up after the animals. They should also display signs to encourage the use of face masks. These places should “facilitate hand hygiene; allow for distancing of workers, customers and visitors; and clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched often. Workers should stay at home if they are ill.”

“Wash your hands before and after feeding or cleaning up after your pet” if it is unwell. Additionally, wear gloves and masks, and ensure proper ventilation.

Prof Oura used his presentation to highlight the links between microbes existing in the zoological world and our human sphere.

“Domestic and wild animals play an important role in spreading pathogens to humans,” he said. “However, there is a single species responsible for most of these pathogens coming across and causing pandemics, and that’s us humans.”

Prof Oura listed activities having an adverse effect on the environment or which create opportunities for pandemic spread, including:

- deforestation
- forest encroachment
- close association between animals and humans, often exacerbated by poverty



Pets, wild animals and the CORONAVIRUS

BY GILLIAN MOORE

- wild meat markets/wet markets
- butchering and food preparation in unhygienic conditions
- high-density human populations and unplanned urbanisation
- intensive agriculture practices
- rapid global transport networks

The veterinary virologist said 75 per cent of emerging infectious diseases that affect humans begin as animal diseases, and explained that viruses can mutate and jump from one species to another. Viruses travel from wildlife to domestic animals and then to humans, but also can go directly from wildlife to humans. He noted that SARS-COV-2 was likely to have come from bats, possibly through another species along the way.

He cautioned that Trinidad and Tobago could be at risk for a new viral outbreak:

“In T&T we have wildlife that we hunt and domesticate, domestic animals and vectors... many species of bats, howler monkeys and rodents.”

We are also very close to a “hotspots of viral emergence”

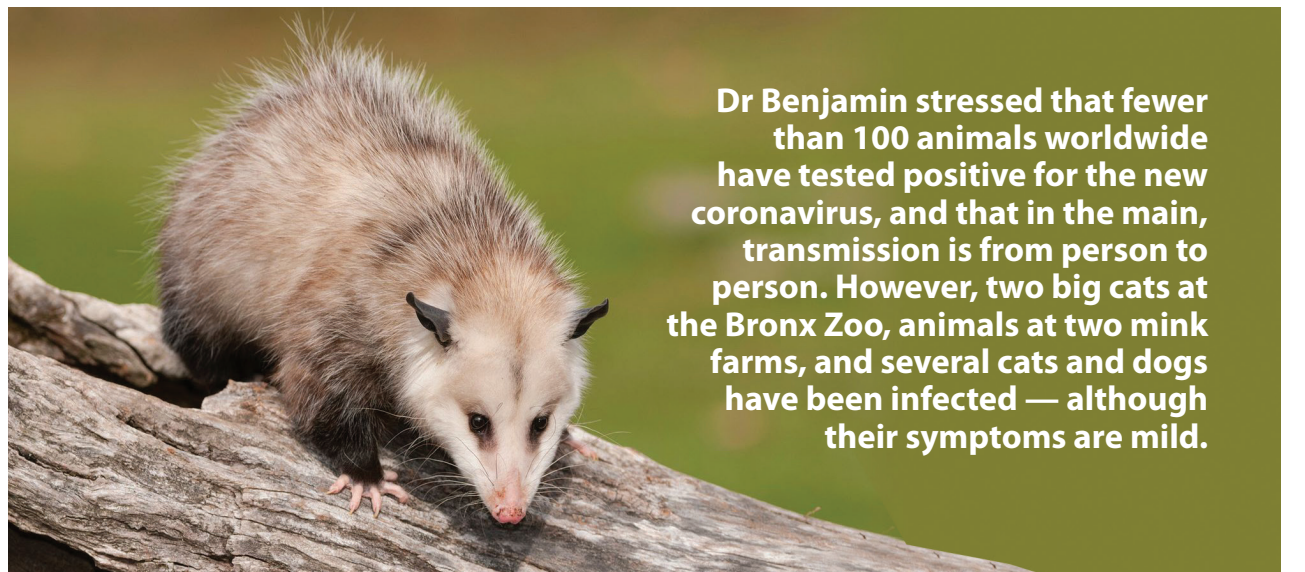
in South America, and “animals and birds are being smuggled here, potentially enabling zoonotic diseases.” Prof Oura said the current crisis showed how natural and human systems affected each other, with humans impacting the environment, animals impacting our health, and coronavirus lockdowns affecting the economy.

“Economics, community engagement and the social sciences are all linked. Everything — people, animals and the environment — is intricately connected,” he explained.

This is part of why “people need to work across disciplines,” Prof Oura said, and why a “One Health” approach is so important.

He said “government agencies should collaborate and start pooling expertise in a trans-disciplinary” fashion, especially with regard to “agriculture, the environment and human health”.

“We must not blame wildlife. We need to change our habits and customs and learn from our experiences, or worse will happen,” he stressed. “If we don’t change the way we are interacting with our planet and nature, and understand these connections, we will suffer even worse pandemics.”



Dr Benjamin stressed that fewer than 100 animals worldwide have tested positive for the new coronavirus, and that in the main, transmission is from person to person. However, two big cats at the Bronx Zoo, animals at two mink farms, and several cats and dogs have been infected — although their symptoms are mild.

■ OUR PEOPLE

LIVING BY DESIGN

Steve Ouditt shares his vision
for social change through
creativity and critical thought

BY VISHANI
RAGOBEER



Steve Ouditt

Steve Anthony Ouditt finds himself at the intersection of pragmatism and imagination. He is not unlike many of his colleagues at the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) at UWI St Augustine, but what makes him unique is his drive to use art and design for social change.

It was this drive, he believes, that led him to become the first-ever Senior Lecturer in Art and Design at the St Augustine Campus. And, after doing some sleuthing on his own, he is convinced that he may very well be the first senior lecturer in this field throughout all of the UWI campuses.

But deeper than that, his character and experiences tell the story of a man with strong convictions and a knack for tinkering away at problems that need solving.

“If you practise art and design for social change, it is not just going to make placards,” he says, explaining that these fields provide a wider scope for problem-solving. He bemoans society’s rigid adherence to algorithms and statistics, and advocates for the inclusion of human expression and the critical use of the intellect.

To understand his convictions, it is necessary to understand his history. Ouditt grew up in the 1960s, the period when Caribbean revolutionaries and thinkers proliferated. He was immersed in the wonderland of books, soaking up their adventures and teachings just as a paintbrush would when dabbed on a palette. He also frequented his neighbourhood Hosay yard, which moulded his inclinations towards design.

Ouditt reminisces fondly on his formative years, acknowledging that he made the important decision to discontinue his studies in Zoology, Botany and Chemistry, and eventually travel to New York to study Fine Arts at the School of Visual Arts. It was at this school that he discovered a particular course, Constructive Design, which helped to concretise his conviction that design could be used for social change. Electives in politics also helped to shape his worldview.

“I don’t think we in the Caribbean could out-manufacture the more industrialised countries, but I absolutely know we can compete with our knowledge capital,” he posits.

Designing is not merely about making a handbag, or a pot. Ouditt explains that designers understand human factors, such as how people live and work and what they value. Such conscientious designing could help to design equality in societies.

Now, fast-forward from the decade he spent in New York. He then made his way to London, where he curated work representing minority ethnic communities. By this time, he was wholly immersed in working for social change. He knew that every piece was a statement, as well as something that could stimulate the imagination towards new possibilities.

When he came to The UWI in 2003, as a lecturer in Fine Arts and later Design, it was an opportunity for him to cultivate these concepts in the minds of his students. He says that when he teaches, particularly his Fine Arts course, he emphasises that creatives don’t just use one medium, they use almost any platform they can to convey the deeply political questions they have, whether it is about the environment, their bodies or human rights.

“When they start to see that, then they start to think that they can make work about the things that they believe in. They get a chance to see that their work is beyond the precious object,” he explains. “Art is really not a material practice. Art is informed by the intellect of the artist that decides to practise it.”

Outside of the UWI, Ouditt exemplifies what it means to live and breathe your passion. Just recently, he led the formation of the Caribbean’s first Behaviour Change Network in collaboration with the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business and with the endorsement of Ogilvy, a leading marketing and public relations agency in London.

Now, this probably begs the question, how do art and design interact with behaviour change? Behavioural change is a key component of social change, according to Ouditt, and understanding the interface between the two helps to clarify how the arts impact society.

Ponder upon the ways you can encourage an obese population to eat healthier. Would you emphasise a

He emphasises that creatives don’t just use one medium, they use almost any platform they can to convey the deeply political questions they have, whether it is about the environment, their bodies or human rights.



Mr Ouditt with Rory Sutherland (right), Vice Chairman of British advertising firm Ogilvy and one of his colleagues (centre).

healthy, balanced diet and exercise? How do you reconcile that agenda with the easy accessibility of fast food (which is also quite inexpensive)? Designing for behavioural change would consider placing healthier food options in more accessible places and place fast food joints in less accessible areas. The option for fast food still exists, but getting it requires more effort. It is this type of critical thinking that can be applied to solving problems with a consciousness of the social inequalities that exist.

“I am very clear that all disciplines can contribute to social development, but I think design, and designing has, for many years, shown that it is one of the leading disciplines in social development,” the Senior Lecturer affirms.

It is a conviction that he has made it his life’s work to help others understand.

EDUCATION



There has been little to no public discussion about the impact of Covid-19 on the Early Childhood (EC) sector. Yet the situation is dire for many teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. Private preschools continue to close down and fully trained teachers (mainly women) are unemployed. In the silence, too, many

teachers have earned nothing for the last five to six months. Our nation is at the crossroads where gains from heavy government expenditure on buildings and staff training to improve quality EC teaching, is threatened. Teachers feel undervalued. Many who were attracted to the profession by Government's promotion of an expanded and modernised EC sector, feel hurt that EC was not prioritised to receive Government grants to keep preschool teachers and preschool businesses afloat.

Those are some views which prompted The UWI Early Childhood Caravan, a group dedicated to supporting young children's development and learning through community outreach activities, to conduct a virtual discussion forum for teachers. Titled "Chat and Chai: The Impact of Covid-19 on ECCE in Trinidad and Tobago", the August 13 forum also included parents and other stakeholders. Some 60 participants and 13 facilitators sipped tea in their homes as they virtually discussed the impact of Covid-19 on their

EARLY CHILDHOOD needs Emergency Support to Survive

UWI hosts virtual discussion on COVID-19's impact and the way forward for teachers and preschools

BY DR S A B E E R A H A B D U L - M A J I E D

lives and EC in Trinidad and Tobago.

Participants spoke about needing technology training to switch to remote teaching. Some said they could barely afford mobile phone data which they use for teaching, their children's schooling and sometimes even share with a neighbour. Others were concerned about supporting parents to teach their 3 to 5 year old children at home. Teachers also discussed issues like underprivileged families, low literacy parents, a lack of computer and internet access, and children with special needs. Stress management in a period of uncertainty was also an issue for teachers and parents.

Teachers were also concerned about the lack of recognition they receive. EC is not yet included in the Education Act as part of the formal education system of Trinidad and Tobago. However, teachers have certificates, diplomas, bachelor's and master's degrees even up to PhDs in the sector. Our country signed international agreements, established an EC Division, disseminated curriculum and draft operating standards in a move towards universal preschool education. With so many working mothers today, EC services is an essential service.

Enrollment records for 3 to 4 year old children showed that 19,789 or 78 per cent of our children attend

private preschools with the other 22 per cent go to Servol, government assisted and Ministry of Education schools (Ministry of Education ECCE Division, 2011). However, there is little spotlight on the fact that there will be no places for many children if private preschools, mainly in rented properties, continue to close down. Teachers are scared. Many teachers in government service who normally pray not to lose their jobs at the biennial interview for contract renewal, now have the additional fear of possible "pandemic cutbacks" on staff.

Many countries have rushed through legislation and offered financial packages to protect early childhood education programmes in response to COVID-19. We should do the same. Our EC sector and teachers are crying out for help to prevent collapse.

We at The UWI Early Childhood Caravan are doing our part. In fact, we had a second discussion titled, "Chat and Chai 2: Straight Talk" on August 26th. Clinical psychologist and member of The UWI COVID-19 Task Force Dr Katija Khan graciously attended and advised teachers on pandemic coping strategies and where to get help. We hope targeted government support, including financial assistance for this essential service in crisis, will soon be forthcoming.

Dr Sabeerah Abdul-Majied is a Lecturer and Course Coordinator of the Bachelor of Education Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme in the School of Education at UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Humanities and Education.

Japanese Embassy, CLL host third JAPANESE LANGUAGE SPEECH CONTEST

The Embassy of Japan and UWI's Centre for Language Learning (CLL) jointly mounted the Third Japanese Language Speech Contest in Trinidad and Tobago on August 21. This year's edition is the first in the region to be held entirely online. Aidan Roberts, Gabrielle Motilal and Zaynab Nakhid were the winners of the contest's three categories.

The Japanese section of the CLL often sets the tone for the cultural activities and Friday's event was no exception. The virtual event was attended online by Mr Tatsuo Hirayama, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; his wife Mrs Sachiko Hirayama; Mr Nakaba Aoyagi, CEO of Caribbean Gas Chemical Limited; and Mr Goro Sato and Ms Shiho Sato, Japanese Language Senior Specialists from The Japan Foundation in Mexico. The latter four served as judges for the evening.

The contest was held with the aim to:

- Create an opportunity for Japanese language learners to express their thoughts using the language.
- Provide an interactive opportunity for learners to share their language acquisition experience.
- Give learners a chance to show their language achievement to family and friends.
- Improve participants' proficiency by guiding them through the process of drafting and delivering a speech.
- Increase public recognition of Japanese language education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Nine participants competed in one of three categories on the night – Elementary, Intermediate and Special. Their speeches were judged on linguistic competence, content and performance. Each participant had to introduce their pre-recorded speech and respond to a live question from one of the judges.

The virtual audience included former CLL Japanese tutors and current Embassy and CLL staff, as well as friends and well-wishers. While the judges were deliberating, the audience was able to participate in Japanese trivia games and catch up with the Japan-based tutors. Those who registered early were able to engage directly in the Zoom session while a livestream to the CLL's Facebook page ensured that none were left out.

CLL Japanese Language Speech Contest

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Winner:
Gabrielle Motilal

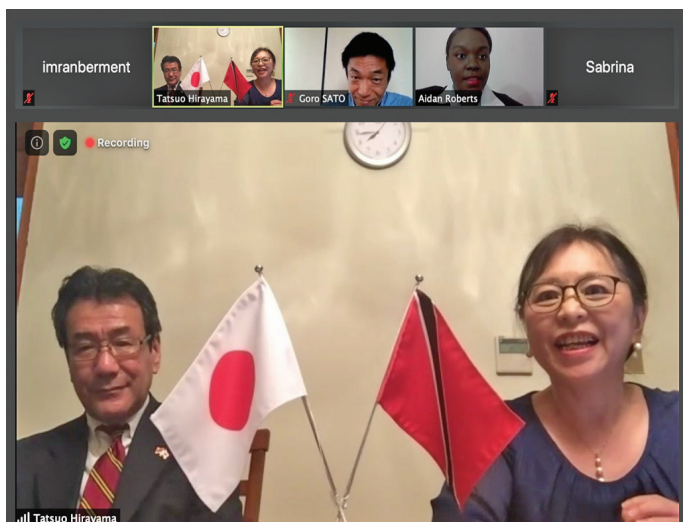
Troy Roberts
Sabrina Morgan

SPECIAL CATEGORY

Winner:
Zaynab Nakhid
Yisaiah Williams

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY

Winner:
Aidan Roberts
Matthias Elliot
Aneeqah Ghany
Adiola Chase



Japanese Ambassador Tatsuo Hirayama and his wife Mrs Sachiko Hirayama in attendance at the virtual speech contest. In the display above are Mr Goro Sato, a Japanese Language Senior Specialist, and Ms Aidan Roberts, winner of the contest's intermediate category.

UWI Calendar of Events | SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2020

The First Year Experience (FYE) has Begun

ONLINE

The First Year Experience (FYE) is UWI St Augustine's official new student orientation programme for incoming undergraduate and postgraduate students. This dynamic programme is held annually and features a comprehensive suite of orientation activities, events and initiatives designed to support the successful transition of students to campus life. This year's FYE will be hosted online under the theme, Dare to Be.

For more information, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fye/>.



The Caribbean and the Coronavirus Crisis: Big Problems for Small States September 22

ONLINE WEBINAR SERIES



COVID-19 has seemingly emerged as the most pressing challenge confronting the world today. Its complex realities have rapidly disrupted diplomacy and global affairs. The Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (DAOC) invites you to learn more at the first session in their webinar series. The topic that will be discussed is The Caribbean and the Coronavirus Crisis: Big Problems for Small States.

Tune in from 9:30 am. Registration cost is TT\$150.

For more details on panellists and the registration process, please visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/daoc/webinars>.

Faculty of Food and Agriculture Virtual Short Courses September to October

ONLINE

The Faculty of Food and Agriculture (FFA) is hosting a series of virtual short courses open to interested people at all levels. Sign up for these courses happening on the following dates:

- **September 6 to 10** | Small Gas Engine Repair | Cost: \$1,200
- **September 15 to 19** | Basic Home Gardening | Cost: \$1,000
- **September 28 to October 2** | Hydroponics 1 | Cost: \$1,200
- **September 21 to 26** | Composting Essentials | Cost: \$1,000
- **October 5 to 9** | Hydroponics 2 | Cost: \$1,500

All participants receive certificates upon completion of the course. Special discounted offers are available.

To register and get additional course details, please visit: <https://sta.uwi.edu/ffa/bdushortcourses> or email bdu@sta.uwi.edu or call 662-3719/662-2002 exts. 82318 and 83322.

Learn about Protocol, Diplomacy, Corporate Comms and more September and October

ONLINE



Registration is open for the following virtual training modules offered by the Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean (DAOC):

- **September 28 to October 1**
Protocol and Diplomacy: A Guide for the Modern Professional | Cost: US\$750.
- **October 26 to 30**
The Art of Corporate and Diplomatic Communications | Cost: US\$800.

Special rates are available to UWI staff and students.

To register and for more information visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/daoc/> or email diplomaticacademy@sta.uwi.edu or call (868) 662-2002 exts. 85362, 85360, 85359.

LITTCON 2020 International Literary Conference September 21 to 24

ONLINE

The Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies (LCCS) is hosting their International Literary Conference – LITTCON 2020: The Literature of Trinidad and Tobago: 1980 to 2020. The conference takes place online via Zoom. This conference is the first of what is expected to be a series of collaborations aimed at surveying late 20th century and early 21st century developments in the oral and written literature of the islands of the English-speaking Caribbean, including Guyana and Belize.

Register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Litcon2020>



Gain knowledge in Occupational, Environmental, Safety and Health (OESH) concepts October to December

ONLINE

Register now for Occupational, Environmental, Safety and Health (OESH) Professional Development workshops and courses hosted by the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST).

Workshops include:

- **September 12**
Advanced Waste-Water and Sanitation Management (6 hours) | Cost: \$500.
- **October 13 and 20**
Risk Management (6 hours) | Cost: \$500.

Courses include:

- **September 21 to October 28**
Entrepreneurship (24 hours) | Cost: \$2,000.
- **October 2 to 4**
Advanced Occupational Safety (18 hours) | Cost: \$1,500.
- **November 7 to 29**
Advanced Ecotoxicology – Risk Assessment (30 hours) | \$2,500.
- **December 4 to 6**
Advanced Hazard Recognition Evaluation and Control (18 hours) | Cost: 1,500.

For further information, please contact: mscoesh@sta.uwi.edu or Tamika.Elcock@sta.uwi.edu or call 662-2002 exts. 83268 and 83269 or 662-6013.