UWI DISTANCE EDUCATION CENTRE (UWIDEC)

Derrick Thompson BSc (Hons.), Dip. Bus. Admin. UWI
– Campus Co-ordinator

WORK OF THE CENTRE

Academic Programming

During the year under review, the UWIDEC concentrated its effort on the conversion of existing courseware to either blended delivery format or full online delivery format.

The Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities and Education again spearheaded the academic efforts, through the Departments of Management Studies (DOMS) and Educational Studies (DES) respectively. The Department of Educational Studies was aggressive in its online efforts by way of the launch of two new programmes: Literacy Studies and the B.Ed. Secondary. Developmental work was also undertaken in conjunction with the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) to develop and deliver the MSc in Tourism and Hospitality Management.

UWIDEC was also involved in the development and delivery of other externally sponsored programmes, namely:

- UNESCO/UWIDEC Online certificate in e-governance
- FMS/UWIDEC/OAS Online certificate in substance abuse, prevention and treatment.

Special Projects

The main project focus for the year was the continuation of UWI-UNESCO Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education (CUPIDE). Funded through the Japanese Funds in Trust for Capacity Building, CUPIDE involves the development of the capacity of five universities in the region to utilise the information communication technologies for distance education, thus contributing

to the development of the human resource capacity in the region. The completion date of the project was extended from December 2006, to December 2007.

Major achievements for 2006-2007 were (i) provision of training for persons at all five universities in the use of the open source, Moodle Learning Management System, (ii) provision of computers, servers, photocopiers and other equipment (iii) development of a Caribbean distance education Web portal, (iv) development by UWI and UTech of a four module pilot course, "Developing an on-line course using a team approach", and (v) hosting of public lectures in Haiti, Jamaica and Guyana.

For 2007-2008, it is intended to bring the CUPIDE project to successful completion by December 2007. Work on other major projects as assigned by the Director will also be undertaken.

PCF4

The UWIDEC led a regional consortium that co-hosted the Commonwealth of Learning's (COL) (http://www.col.org) fourth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Distance and Open Learning (PCF4) (http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/index.php). The conference was held in Ocho Rios between October 30 and November 4, 2006 under the theme: Achieving Developmental Goals: Innovation, Learning, Collaboration and Foundations.

Training

At the start of each semester, training sessions were organized for newly recruited tutors. E-Tutors were trained to provide effective support to students in the online learning environment. The curriculum section was integral in these training sessions. Training was also conducted for new and returning students in the use of the learning management system. Local tutors were also recruited and training sessions were organized for these tutors. The tutors were very receptive to these sessions. Training sessions were also organized for students at the start of the academic year on how to use the UWI Mona's online registration system, the Learning Management System (Moodle) and the UWIDEC's Management Information System (Student Portal).

Intra Site Operations

In addition to supporting the regular programmes, the ten UWIDEC centres in Jamaica continued to provide support and facilitate the delivery of other non-UWIDEC programmes originating from various Departments/Units. These include the School of Nursing (UWISON) with the delivery of the post RN (BSc.N) and the Project Office with the BEd Secondary Distance programme.

In addition to the work described above, a considerable amount of time and resources were spent building the information systems that will drive the business of the UWIDEC and the Open Campus when it is established. These include a Student Administration System (SAS), an online portal for staff and students and a Management Information System (MIS) to help with the work of the department. These systems are due to become available in August 2007 with the exception of the MIS, which is already in place.

PAPERS PRESENTED

- Marrett, C. and S. Marshall. The Caribbean Universities Project for Integrated Distance Education: Collaborating to overcome the difficulties faced by small, developing states. 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4), Ocho Rios, Jamaica, October-November 2006. (9 pages)

- McKenzie, C., Bell-Kerr, P., & Smith, H. (October, 2006). Tutor Interaction in the Online Environment: An Assessment of e-Tutoring Support in Blended Learning. 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4), Ocho Rios, Jamaica, October-November 2006.

Income Generation

The major income-generation activities were the sale of network service through teleconferencing and the videoconferencing network, and the provision of online resources for delivery.

- Network Services - 1.5M JMD

- Online Resources - 3.2M JMD

- Summer School Income - figures not available at the time of reporting

Information on Students

The total enrolments for UWIDEC programmes across the 10 centres in Jamaica are as follows. Montego Bay showed the highest enrolment of students.

BSc Management Studies Programme	667
BSc Agribusiness Management	4
BEd Educational Administration	66
BEd Secondary (MOEYC)	451
BEd Literacy	35
Diploma in Gender and Development Studies	4

The Vacation Student Support Programme (VSSP) is geared toward improving learning skills for distance and online learners. The courses were offered during the summer break for the second year at no cost to all applicants to programmes offered via UWIDEC. Sixty percent of all applicants completed both courses - Improving Your Study Skills and Introduction to Online Learning.

The Office of Student Services hosted the annual Summer Workshop for UWIDEC students, July 3-5, 2007. The theme for the workshop was "Building Bridges Connecting with our Distance Learners." There was a very low student turnout for the workshop as a result of students' summertime commitments such as jobs or ongoing school commitments.