

# The University of the West Indies, Mona Health and Wellness Policy

## Background

As the premier tertiary institution in the Caribbean, the University of the West Indies is one of the largest employers in the region. The University provides education at the tertiary level to approximately 14,000 part-time and full time students mainly from Jamaica, and the rest of the Caribbean, with a small percentage from countries in other parts of the world. On the Mona Campus approximately 3000 persons are employed in distinct work categories, namely, Administrative and Technical, Service, Academic, Senior Administrative and Professional.

## Policy Rationale

The University's Strategic plan (2007 – 2012)<sup>1</sup> identified teaching and learning as a core strategic focus. The Plan noted that educational transformation could take place by utilizing the strategies of providing students with a more diverse and flexible learning experience as well as by developing their Learning Environment. The anticipated impact of these and other actions would facilitate improvements in academic throughput and completion rates. The University is facing some critical challenges in its history as a regional institution. These are under-performance, precarious funding arrangements and the emergence of competitive challengers in the tertiary education arena. Of all these, the funding situation (exacerbated by the global and regional economic recession) headlines the list of challenges. An analysis of the strategic challenges confronting the UWI Mona by Hickling et al<sup>2</sup> in 2003 called for the implementation of a *process of strategic repositioning* of the institution to respond to these emerging challenges. Among the key strategic recommendations made was *creating a work environment that encourages staff loyalty and productivity*.

Improving the productivity of staff and students is critical to the attainment of the University's strategic objectives. Strategic repositioning must therefore include a sharper focus on improving and maintaining the health and wellbeing of the University community. The proposed Wellness Policy aims to support the University's strategic repositioning objective by developing policies and programmes which have the potential to improve productivity, reduce operating costs and maintain a healthy professional and academic environment at the UWI.

## Health Conditions in Jamaica and the Impact on the University

Chronic non-communicable diseases, sexually transmitted infections and violence-related injuries and deaths are among the three priority health areas in the Caribbean region. The prevalence of obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes mellitus and are estimated to be 25%, 25%, 12% and 8% respectively (Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey 2007-8<sup>3</sup>).

Care and treatment for these and other diseases have had a significant impact on the University's budget. Notably, in 2007 the premiums paid by UWI employees for health care were increased by almost 100%, due to inflation and a high utilization of the plan. Currently the utilization rate of the health plan is over 100%. This will significantly impact the loss ratio on the Health Plan and invariably lead to significantly higher health premiums in the future.

### **Aims of the Policy**

The policy is aimed at establishing the framework to guide the development and implementation of a comprehensive Health and Wellness programme at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus with the aims of:

- a. Reducing health insurance costs to the University
- b. Reducing the burden of disease on the UWI student and staff population
- c. Improving productivity among students and staff

This policy will ensure that relevant health and wellness issues are addressed as it relates to University students and staff. Furthermore, it will ensure that the programmes and procedures are recognized as part of the University's operations, which will provide continuity and consistency in its application. This policy would also accomplish the following:

- i. Assist the University to create an environment which caters for the total wellbeing of students and employees
- ii. Provide a mechanism for the University to protect its investment in the development of students and staff
- iii. Support individual and national investment in the health, education and development of students and staff

The proposed Wellness Policy would serve as an umbrella policy which would house the components of a comprehensive health and wellness programme. Currently, there are some existing Health and Wellness initiatives and policies, such as the University HIV/AIDS policy, Sexual Harassment policy, and the Sexual Safety Initiative programme. These would be incorporated into the Wellness Policy.

### **Responsibility**

The policy shall be the responsibility of the Campus Registrar, who will ensure that it is implemented and applied across Facilities, Departments, Administrative units and Halls of Residence in an impartial and consistent manner.

### **Policy Statement**

The University commits to support the health and wellbeing of students and staff in the following areas:

- a. Emotional and mental health
- b. Physical health
- c. Social wellness
- d. Spiritual wellness
- e. Financial wellness

The University of the West Indies, Mona recognizes the importance of providing for its students and employees total wellbeing, within a caring environment. This is expected to facilitate their protection and health, while supporting their efforts to self actualize towards achieving social and economic stability. It undertakes to implement policies and programmes as part of its overall strategy to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of students and employees in a sensitive and caring manner.

Special programmes will be undertaken in the following areas:

- i. Chronic disease management
- ii. Alcohol & Substance Use
- iii. HIV/STI prevention and sexual harassment
- iv. Employee Assistance Programme
- v. Cigarette smoking

### **The policy will apply to:**

All students and all staff of The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.

### **Policy Components**

#### **i. Research**

An assessment of the health status of students and staff will be critical to understanding the key health issues affecting the University population. Data from the University Health Services and specially commissioned studies will be utilized.

#### **ii. Education & training**

Ongoing health education and training will be provided for student and staff groups. This education will be implemented in collaboration with student and staff representative groups (i.e. student leaders, unions/staff associations, departments)

#### **iii. Environmental supports**

Varied health and wellness support systems will be established within the University. These may include designated 'no smoking' zones, safe spaces, recreational areas and physical activity programmes. Partnerships with existing activities and/or programmes will be promoted.

#### **iv. Health Services**

The University Health Centre will continue to provide primary health care services to the University community

#### **Key stakeholders**

Key stakeholders in the implementation process will include the Campus Registrar's Office, University Health Services, Guild of Students, Human Resources Management Division, Office of Student Services & Development, Chapel Management Committee, Staff Bargaining Units, Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments.

#### **Policy sensitization**

Special sensitization sessions will be implemented for the leadership of the student body – Guild of Students, representatives of Staff Bargaining Units, Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments. These key groups are expected to familiarize themselves with the policy provisions. All students and staff of the University will also be sensitized to the policy through various media - print; electronic; social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) and mobile technology (e.g. text messaging).

#### **Focal point**

A Focal Point should be appointed from each of the key stakeholder groups. This individual will have the responsibility of ensuring that the policy is administered at the local level.

## **Alcohol Use or Misuse and Substance Abuse**

#### **Purpose**

Set out below is a policy and procedures intended to guide the University of the West Indies, Mona in managing instances where students and employees are experiencing challenges with alcohol use or misuse, or substance abuse. The policy is intended to ensure that there are rules and regulations to handle such matters in a caring, equitable and responsible manner where such challenges are:

- affecting, or threaten to affect the student's/ employee's ability to perform his or her duties, or
- threaten or affect his or her colleagues within the work or academic environment.

#### **Policy Statement**

The University of the West Indies recognizes its responsibility to provide students and employees with a healthy and safe academic and working environment to ensure that they can perform their duties and studies efficiently in pursuance of the institution's vision and mission and his or her personal aspirations. The University also recognizes the uniqueness that exists within a University community and is committed to providing an environment where such needs can be facilitated. However, the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance is generally prohibited in work and academic spaces. But the University at its discretion may allow the consumption or use of alcohol with the understanding that such use shall comply with all Policies, Rules, Regulations and Law related to its use and consumption.

## **Policy**

1. While the University supports collective responsibility it believes that each employee is responsible for his or her actions.
2. The University through the Wellness Committee and the University Health Centre shall be responsible to design and deliver programmes to educate students and employees on the causes and effects of the abuse or misuse of alcohol and other substances.
3. Respect the needs and rights of non-drinkers and children on the campus.
4. The University shall also provide training to Deans, Heads of Departments, Supervisors, representatives of Staff Bargaining Units and the Guild Council to sensitize them to the issues and provide them with the knowledge and skills to identify students and employees with possible alcohol or substance abuse problems.
5. Where a student or employee recognizes that he or she has a challenge with the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance the University undertakes to provide assistance within its resources and policy guidelines.
6. The University undertakes to treat all students and employees who have a recognized challenge with the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance with care and dignity and will ensure that the rights of such persons are protected.
7. The University will ensure that all Policies, Rules and Regulations and Law related to the use or misuse of Alcohol or any other substance are upheld.
8. Where any student's or employee's action/s as a result of the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance violates any Policy, Rules or Regulations, the appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

9. Where any student's or employee's action resulting from the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance threatens or endangers life or property the University will take the actions necessary to mitigate loss of life or property damage.

### **Conditions related to the purchase, sale, service and consumption of alcohol on University premises**

1. Any recognized University group wishing to sell alcohol on the University premises or at any University-related event must apply for and maintain in its name all necessary liquor permits from the relevant national authorities.
2. Liquor permits must be visibly displayed at events where alcohol is being served
3. The University's security services must be informed of any planned event at which alcoholic beverage (s) will be served or sold.
4. Persons engaged in serving alcohol (i.e. bartenders) must have successfully completed a Server Intervention training programme approved by the University
5. Non-alcoholic beverages, drinks or juices must be available to accommodate persons who are unable to or who prefer not to consume alcohol.
6. Food or snacks must be available at all events for which alcohol is to be served.
7. The University reserves the right to conduct regular inspections of premises/events where alcohol is being served. Breaches and irregularities shall be reported to the Office of the Campus Registrar and appropriate disciplinary action taken in accordance with University regulations.

### **Procedure**

#### **Students/Employees who request assistance**

1. Where the student/employee seeks assistance through his or her Department the Human Resource Management Division - Office of Student Services & Development/Employee Relations Unit shall be contacted and the student/employee shall be referred to the University Health Centre by that department for assessment.
2. Upon assessment the Clinical Director shall make a recommendation for treatment and the employee/student shall proceed with treatment as recommended. Where the student/employee will require time-off, arrangements shall be made through the Human Resource Management Division - Office of Student Services & Development/relevant Faculty/Employee Relations Unit.
3. If the student/employee refuses assistance through the University Health Centre he or she shall be responsible to seek treatment and will be supported within the Policies, Rules and

Regulation of the University. The student/employee shall provide the Clinical Director with a report within six months of referral.

4. The Head of Department or Supervisor/University department shall be required to make periodic reports to the Human Resource Management Division on the student's/employee's work performance to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.
5. Where the student's/employee's performance does not improve within a six month period, the University through the Campus Registrar will determine the appropriate action.

#### **Where the HOD/Supervisor Recognizes a Problem and Requests Assistance**

1. Where a Supervisor suspects that an student's/employee's work is affected or his or her colleagues' wellbeing are threatened as a result of the individual's abuse or misuse of alcohol or any other substance then the Office of Student Services & Development/Human Resource Management Division's Employee Relations Unit shall be contacted and the matter reported in writing to the Clinical Director.
2. In such instances the student/employee shall be referred to the University Health Centre for assessment and the Office of Student Services & Development/Human Resource Management Division advised on the matter.
3. Where the University Health Centre determines that the student/employee is being affected by the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance then the Clinical Director shall make recommendation (s) for treatment.
4. The student/employee shall proceed with the treatment recommendation as directed by the Clinical Director. The Office of Student Services & Development/relevant Faculty/Employee Relations Unit shall be contacted where the employee/student is granted leave for treatment.
5. Where the student/employee refuses the treatment recommended by the University Health Centre he or she shall be responsible to secure treatment at a facility approved by the University Health Centre. The University Health Centre should be provided with a report within six months of referral.
6. Where the student's/employee's performance does not improve within a six month period the University shall assess the matter to determine if appropriate action should be taken or if further treatment is required.

## **Where the Student group/Staff Bargaining Units or Family Member Seeks Assistance on behalf of the Student/Employee**

1. Where the Student group/Staff Bargaining Units or a family member seeks assistance on behalf of the student/employee for the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance, the Office of Student Services & Development/Employee Relations Unit or University Health Centre shall be contacted. This can only be addressed by The University if the use or misuse of alcohol or any other substance is affecting the work performance/conduct of the student/employee.
2. The Student group Representative/Staff Bargaining Units or Family member must provide evidence that he or she has the consent of the student/employee for the seeking of the assistance.
3. Where the Human Resource Management Division/University department is satisfied that the student's/employee's consent was received by the family member or Staff Bargaining Unit representative then he or she will be referred to the University Health Centre for assessment and treatment recommendation.
4. The student/employee shall be referred to the University Health Centre for assessment and the Office of Student Services & Development/Human Resource Management Division/University department advised on the matter.
6. The student/employee shall proceed with the treatment recommendation as directed by the Clinical Director. The Office of Student Services & Development /relevant Faculty/ Employee Relations Unit/ shall be contacted where the employee is granted leave for treatment.
7. Where the student/employee refuses the treatment recommended by the University Health Centre he or she shall be responsible to secure treatment at a facility approved by the University Health Centre. The University Health Centre should be provided with a report within six months of referral.
8. Where the student's/employee's performance does not improve within a six month period the University shall assess the matter to determine if appropriate action should be taken or if further treatment is required.



## **ADDENDUM**

### **SMOKING ON THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES MONA CAMPUS**

Smoking (including first-hand and passive or second hand smoking) has been shown to be a risk factor for lung cancer, heart disease and stroke. Passive smoking also contributes to other negative health effects including respiratory illnesses (e.g. sore throat, chronic cough, shortness of breath and worsening of asthma and allergy symptoms) and reduced birth weight (linked to exposure of pregnant women).<sup>4</sup>

In support of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control<sup>5</sup> (WHO FCTC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has developed policy recommendations for Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries to aid in the implementation of policies concordant with the treaty provisions.<sup>6</sup> This policy has therefore been adopted to support the protection of the University community from exposure to tobacco smoke (ETS) through the creation of 100% Smoke Free-Environments.

#### **Buildings:**

Smoking is banned in all University buildings including, but not limited to:

- All enclosed public spaces\* such as lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, meeting rooms, libraries, lobbies, foyers and corridors
- All offices, laboratories, workshops and studios, halls of residence
- All common areas such as staff/lunch rooms, rest rooms (bathrooms), study rooms, corridors, stairways, restaurants/canteens, car parks

#### **Open spaces:**

Smoking is also banned in the vicinity of entrances to buildings, external doors and windows, ventilation systems and semi-enclosed areas such as verandahs.

#### **Vehicles:**

Smoking is banned in all University vehicles (including departmental vehicles) with the exception of those issued to staff for private use.

#### **Publicizing the Policy**

1. 'No smoking' signs must be visibly displayed within designated no smoking areas
2. All job advertisements should include a reference to this policy
3. All new staff members should receive a copy of this policy

*\*Enclosed public spaces are spaces which are enclosed by walls and ceilings or roofs which are open to use by the public or sections of the public including by membership of a club or other body.*