The Open Campus, UWI, Grieves the Passing of Mr. Geoff Brown

September 23, 2008, Jamaica, W.I.

It was with great shock and deep sadness that the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies, formally the School of Continuing Studies (SCS), the UWI Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) and the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU), learnt of the sudden passing on Monday, 22 September 2008, of Mr. Geoffrey (Geoff) V. Brown, O.D. Mr. Brown was a distinguished member of the former SCS, and served for many years as a senior lecturer in the Social Welfare Training Centre (SWTC) until his retirement in 1993. He still lectured on occasion at the SWTC in addition to his other activities as a human resource development and management consultant.

The Director of the Open Campus Country Sites, Mrs. Luz Longsworth states that “as a staff member and as Head of the SWTC, Mr. Brown initiated much of the groundwork and was instrumental in providing financial assistance for some of our early specialised units, which provide social development training for the region. On behalf of the staff of the University of the West Indies Open Campus community, the staff at the Social Welfare Training Centre and on my own behalf, I wish to extend heartfelt sympathies to his bereaved family on the passing of an eminent and distinguished gentleman, who served his country, the Caribbean and the hemisphere with distinction.”
Educated at the Mico Teacher’s College in Jamaica, the University College of the West Indies and Columbia University, Mr. Brown began his distinguished career as a civil servant in outreach programmes during the early years of the probation services in Jamaica in the 1950’s. He honed his early activities in social work as a social worker at various agencies in New York City from 1960-67 and was Executive Director of the Big Brothers of Metropolitan Toronto in Canada. While in Canada, he also acted as a consultant in social welfare policies to the provisional governments of Ontario and Alberta, as well as the director of the Addiction Research Foundation in Toronto.

Upon his return to Jamaica and the SWTC in 1981, Mr. Brown became involved with the American Field Service (AFS) Intercultural Programmes in Jamaica as Founder and as National Director. During his tenure as Head of the SWTC, Mr. Brown was a committed proponent of the Centre’s 50-year tradition of social work and social development training, as well as programme development for Caribbean and overseas social workers professional and non-professionals.

Mr. Lincoln Williams, the Head of the SWTC who is currently on sabbatical leave, describes Mr. Brown “as a very generous person who was devoted to advancing our aspirations for a strong and viable Caribbean though excellence in social work and training. He was a dedicated and committed teacher, whose main thrust was to train social workers to recognise and deal with institutional and political power structures in their countries and communities in order to work around them and use scarce resources in the best way possible”.

Acting Head of the SWTC, Mrs. Desna Robinson, also describes Mr. Brown’s contribution to social work and training as far-reaching across the Caribbean region and the diaspora. “He was a dear friend, and a kind-hearted and gentle person who helped to lay the foundation of social work and education in Jamaica, the region and around the world.

The UWI Open Campus gives thanks for the life and legacy of this distinguished figure in social work training and in honouring his contribution to the development of Jamaica and the Caribbean community, extends its deepest condolences to his family.

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