

Professor Dale Webber
Pro Vice Chancellor & Principal
University of the West Indies
Mona Campus

Principal's Address – Mona Social Services 2019

In 2006, a visionary step was taken in establishing The UWI Township Project. The Mona Social Services Company (MSS), a registered non-profit, followed in two years later and can today boast major achievements in advancing the agenda to successfully integrate and invigorate inner-city communities surrounding the Campus. As Principal, it is my honour to serve as the Chairman of the Board of MSS and to congratulate the team on the critical work that they do with much tenacity to build and mobilize communities across the island while enhancing the quality of lives of many.

The question as to how higher education and universities play a role in revitalizing communities and countries, is a global one. We have a unique role to play in anchoring the sustainable growth, prosperous present and resilient futures of people well beyond the walls of The UWI and in faraway parts of the region. The MSS team's work in transforming the Mona Valley through research-based interventions supports the national policy focus of Vision 2030 and beyond. This plays a critical role in harnessing and nurturing the human capital that we need to remain globally competitive and innovate in seeking solutions to the problems of now and the challenges of the future.

Our partners in the community, private sector and other stakeholder groups continue to play a vital role in achieving the overarching vision. In its over 70 years of existence, The UWI has positioned itself as a hotbed of innovation and collaboration, now with a keen focus on strong growth areas like entrepreneurship and tourism. We aim to provide our students, some coming from surrounding communities, with the skills necessary to succeed in life as individuals and to compete in increasingly global workplaces that engender a service leadership mind-set of how we can succeed together.

Increasingly, academic analysis has moved from being viewed as a brilliant theory to providing practical points of public policy supporting the work of local governments, private philanthropic efforts and most importantly, empowering key community actors to be the change they wish to see in their communities and the world. At an institutional level, universities are well positioned to offer inclusive, independent assessments of issues ranging from Entrepreneurship (UWI Community Film Project and August Student Boarding Project) to Health (Early Childhood Nutrition Research) and Crime Prevention. Most fundamentally, MSS has done significant work in the areas of Education and Skills Training. Seventy-three (73) young people have received the UWI Township Scholarship amounting to an investment of over J\$50M; thirty (30) have graduated from The UWI to date including, 5 First Class Honours and 22 Second Class Honours students. We must not lose sight of the fact that access to higher education improves lives. Education enhances lives in a tangible way; it boosts self-knowledge, employment opportunities and promotes increased civic participation.

The UWI has proudly positioned itself as an agent of change deploying tools for the attainment of social and economic mobility. Our University is not an ‘ivory tower’ but a deliberate crafted aspirational space that welcomes all and actively fosters opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange and social empowerment.

The work of the MSS team must be highly commended. While we continue to seek out avenues for increased financial resources and new partnerships, they have effectively used the available resources to create an impact that will be felt and seen in the years to come. Their resilience continues to bear fruit in the communities served and their commitment demonstrates that we are truly partners in the process to confront and overcome the many challenges facing our society.

In the words of Jamaica’s first national hero and global anti-colonial champion, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, *“The ends you serve that are selfish will take you no further than yourself but the ends you serve that are for all, in common, will take you into eternity.”* I wish the team every success with their continued work and selfless efforts. I thank our many partners for their support and congratulate the communities who have grasped the opportunities presented to transform their lives, community and ultimately our country and region.