

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

Principal's Welcome – New Staff Orientation, UWI (Mona) 2018

Welcome to The University of the West Indies! You join The UWI family at a special time in our history; a time of reflection, introspection, celebration and exciting plans for the future.

In 1948, The UWI was merely a fledgling institution with 33 medical students; today we can count 18 current and former Heads of Caribbean Governments amongst our alumni and operate across four Campuses – Mona, Cave Hill, St. Augustine and the dynamic Open Campus with over 50,000 students and faculty from countries across the region and the world.

The Mona Campus is once again the largest Campus with a student population of 18787 in 2017 and a record number accepting our offers in 2018. Hard work and an unwavering commitment to excellence among our faculty, staff and students have earned The UWI the respect and recognition of global institutions along with private and public sector partners.

As we move beyond these 70 years of service, it is important to be deliberate in identifying the ways in which team UWI can build on that legacy. It therefore requires an ongoing commitment to the fulfilment of our strategic agenda:

- Our 2017-2022 Strategic Plan is built on the three (3) foundational pillars of **Access, Alignment** and **Agility**;
- Our **Vision** is to be an excellent Global University rooted in the Caribbean;
- Our **Mission** is to advance learning, create knowledge and foster innovation for the positive transformation of the Caribbean and the wider world.

Our **core values** are rooted in:

- *Integrity*: We create a culture of accountability in our management practices;

- *Excellence*: we offer consistent high-quality service, benchmarked against international standards and best practices;
- *Diversity*: we sustain an inclusive social, academic, and administrative culture;
- *Gender Justice*: we have established an open and welcoming culture and work/study environment;
- *Student Centeredness*: we create suitable policies, governance and daily operations which facilitate delivery of an exceptional scholastic experience for all students.

As your team leader, I can assure you of my passion for this institution and my commitment to its success. I started my journey here as a student in the 80s, matriculated to faculty and then senior leadership to where I stand today. It was not that I had nowhere else to go; I truly believe that we are a light rising from the west because I have experienced and witnessed first-hand the transformational power of education especially when passionate people are involved.

Research indicates that employees have three primary needs: interesting work, recognition for doing a good job, and being informed of things that are going on in the company. I promise you will find all three at The UWI Mona Campus.

The Chinese Bamboo Tree – A Lesson in Faith, Perseverance and Growth

Have you ever heard the story of the Chinese Bamboo Tree? Allow me to quickly share this powerful lesson with you about patience, faith, perseverance, growth & development and most surprising of all, human potential! I particularly like this story because as my students, family and colleagues will know, one of my favourite things to do is use the natural environment to demonstrate life lessons.

Like any plant, the growth of the Chinese Bamboo Tree requires nurturing – water, fertile soil, sunshine. In its first year, there are no visible signs of activity. In the second year, again, no growth above the soil. The third, the fourth, still nothing. The patience of the farmer is tested and feelings of discouragement and doubt begin to set in. Why all this watering and caring in the face of zero results?

Finally, in the fifth year – behold, a miracle! There is growth. And what growth it is! The Chinese Bamboo Tree grows 80 feet in just six weeks!

But let's be serious, does the Chinese Bamboo Tree really grow 80 feet in six weeks? Did the Chinese Bamboo Tree lie dormant for four years only to grow exponentially in the fifth? Or, was the little tree growing underground, developing a root system strong enough to support its potential for outward growth in the fifth year and beyond?

The answer is, of course, obvious. The tree did not grow overnight; all the consistent work, nurturing and care laid the foundation for exponential growth.

I have opted to share this story with you because as a team we are about to embark on a collective journey that is very similar to the process of the bamboo tree. Creating a green Campus and a culture of sustainability; deepening and strengthening our partnerships towards increasing opportunities for students and faculty; responding to the needs of the twenty-first century learner and boosting our use of modern technology; improving our financial position through innovation and creativity, plus several other plans, policies and projects to be unveiled in the coming months.

We will likely have days, months and years of putting in the work, watering the soil bearing the seeds of goals, nurturing our students and being frustrated many times by the seeming lack of growth and results.

What this University needs are people, who are willing to patiently toil, like the Chinese Bamboo farmer, towards worthwhile dreams and goals, building strong character while overcoming adversity and challenges together, all the time growing the strong institutional and internal foundation in preparation for the success we know will come.

It is my pleasure to welcome you once again to The University of the West Indies, an employer of choice. Let us keep watering and believing in The UWI dream so that we too can be flying high and setting loftier goals against which future generations can set even higher standards for this great institution.

Regardless of what role you play you are important.

Did you know that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., spoke in our Assembly Hall on June 20, 1965? Dr. King's speech was entitled "*Facing the Challenge of a New Age*". In the words of Dr. King "*If it falls to our luck to be street-sweepers, sweep the streets like Raphael painted pictures, like Michaelangelo carved marble, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, and like Beethoven composed music. Sweep the streets*

so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth would have to pause and say 'Here lived a great street sweeper.'"

Be the best that you can be. Do not compare yourself to others but instead compare yourself to YOUR BEST SELF. The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.

GOOD MORNING