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**University of the West Indies**  
**Mona Campus**

**Principal's Address – 2018 Matriculation and Welcome Ceremony**

*'Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.'* Malcolm X

I take great pleasure in welcoming you all to The University of the West Indies – your place to shine!

Today marks a significant moment in your life and academic journey. Whilst I encourage you to revel in it and celebrate this achievement, I also want you to reflect on the fact that you share this occasion with millions of students worldwide. Did you know that in spite of our challenges with less than desired levels of tertiary enrolment in the region among young people, that over 262 million members of the global community are forecasted to be enrolled in institutions of higher learning by 2025? That's in the next seven years. It is also important to note that nearly all of this growth will be in the developing world, with more than half in China and India alone.

Sixty-three per cent (63%) of CARICOM's population comprises young people under the age of 30 years. Our reality in Jamaica and the region is not that youth are the future, you are the present. Your education, holistic development, safety, security, health, innovation and creativity, are the foundations on which we have to build sustainable communities, countries and a united region.

Therefore, the significance of today goes far beyond your personal achievement and extends to a national and regional imperative. I encourage the qualified and deserving candidates who are fortunate to be offered admission into this institution, young or old, to count yourselves as ambassadors of progress in the present and guardians of the future.

**UWI at 70 and Beyond – Planning for the Future**

For the 2018/2019 academic session, a total number of 18,800 students – roughly 900 enrolled at our growing Western Jamaica Campus – have selected and continue

to choose The UWI as their tertiary institution of choice. Our undergraduates, graduate students and faculty can rest assured that we will continue to strive for excellence in everything that we do. This will require specific focus on programme diversification and encouraging a strong culture of research that will improve the quality of lives for all and positively enhance the economic prospects of our region (especially in the area of entrepreneurship and innovation).

In 1948, we opened relatively humble doors to 33 eager and bright medical students; we recently celebrated 70 years of educational excellence and service to Jamaica and the region. Ladies and gentlemen, as a proud Pelican and your new Principal, I stand proud of all that has been accomplished and hopeful about all that I know we will achieve together. We are proud to be a *bonafide* top-ranking institution ranked among the very best in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The University of West Indies was recently ranked as the 4<sup>th</sup> best institution in the area of international outlook; 37<sup>th</sup> overall out of 129 best universities in the Caribbean and Latin America; and 26<sup>th</sup> in the criteria of research, for this region of the world, by the Times Higher Education rankings.

I am both elated and inspired but this to me is just a signal of what we can achieve with fully engaged students, faculty, partners and stakeholders. Apart from these rankings, I envision a UWI that is not only preferred and top of the charts but an institution that by example and culture, produces graduates who continue to make significant contributions to the society. We are fortunate to count 23 former and current Heads of Government, including the current Jamaican Prime Minister The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, as graduates. We have produced change makers and innovators of the highest order who occupy spaces right across the world.

It is up to us to not only revel in the legacy but to build on and strengthen this tradition of excellence that has to be rooted in a culture of efficiency, self-reliance and sustainability. You have come at the right time and I challenge all of you to enlist in this army of purpose that will achieve and exceed the great visions and expectations of our beloved UWI.

The University has continued to focus on her pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and service to society as enshrined in our vision. This positions us as a centre of excellence providing high quality teaching and learning experiences, which will engender the production of world class graduates capable of impacting their environment and being globally competitive.

Students, the distance in time between today's Ceremony and your graduation can appear quite wide; do not be distracted and manage your time wisely. It is important that the investment you have made in yourself and others in you, pays off in a

successful ending. Now is the time for what the young people call '*adulting*'; there will be no one pushing you to attend lectures. Study, participate in outreach and extracurricular activities amongst other things. Be mindful of your activities and influences; deviant behaviour and vices can expose you to unnecessary dangers. Enjoy your time here but be responsible. This University has zero tolerance for any form of plagiarism, discrimination, gender-based violence and unethical behaviour. We welcome respect, care for others, healthy intellectual debate and general productivity. You have just completed an intense period of orientation and I am sure our very capable Student Services and Development team has done a great job of providing initial guidance. You might experience challenges or need support as you go along, never hesitate to seek out and ask for help.

Please, avail yourself of the myriad of opportunities, not only to excel in learning, but possibly to become our leaders and ambassadors. You are now a member of The UWI family.

In spite of limited resources in some areas, the University continues to do its best to deliver quality service to students. We commit to continuing on a path of efficiency and prudence to support our growth. As students, you have a role to play in our success in this regard. Financial planning to support your studies is critical. Become knowledgeable, be proactive and seek out opportunities.

Again, I congratulate you all on making this important step and look forward to the successful journey we will have together. Remember that your success here will not only be a personal achievement but also the platform on which others will stand. What you do here today, has the potential to impact generations to come. Do your very best, be persistent and resilient in the face of challenges and never lose sight of the fact that you are a source of pride to your families, country and humanity. I declare that today's joy shall be permanent.

Best wishes to all the matriculating students and I wish you a productive and memorable time here at The UWI, Mona.