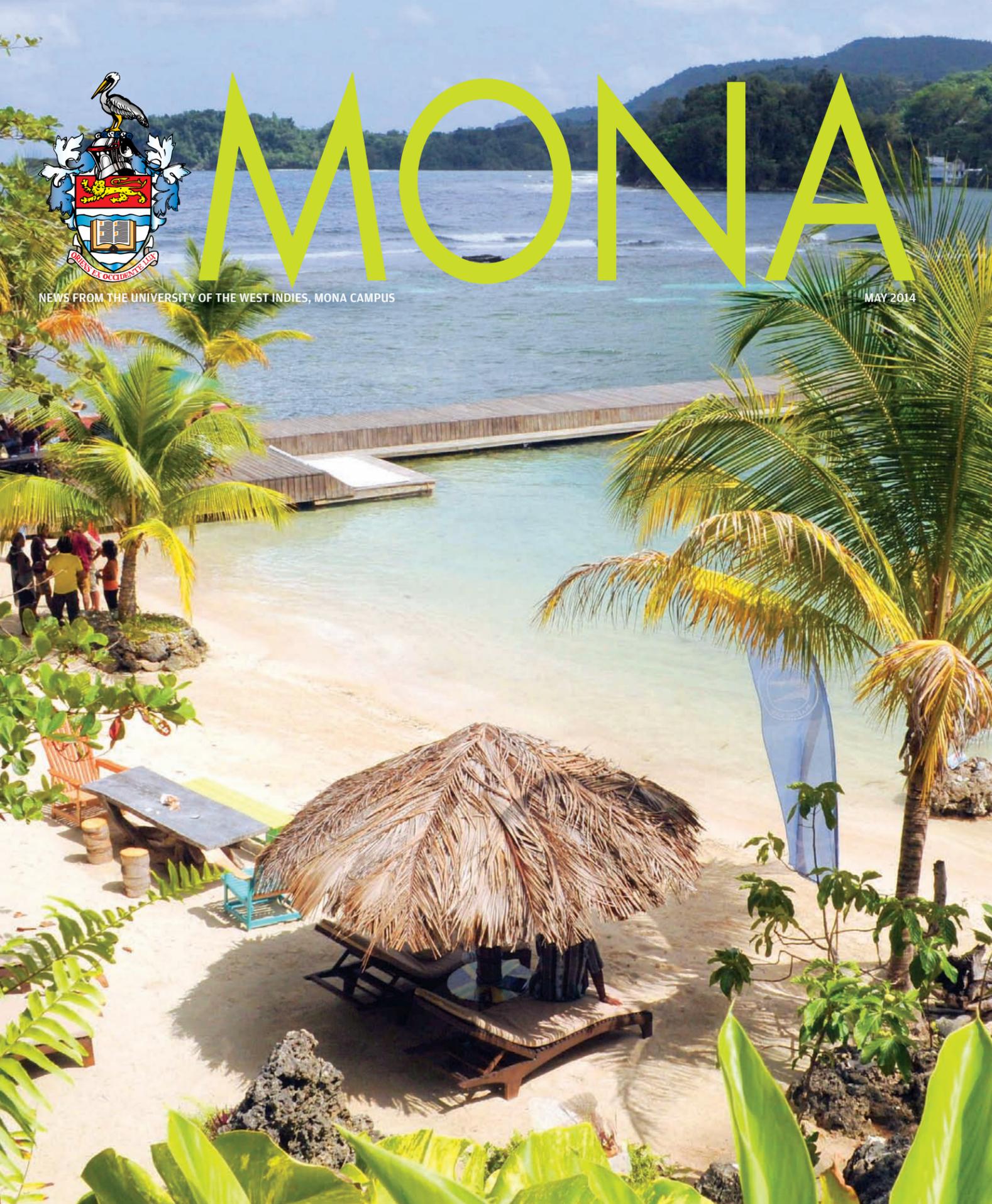




# MONA

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, MONA CAMPUS

MAY 2014



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ANALYZING THE LIONFISH

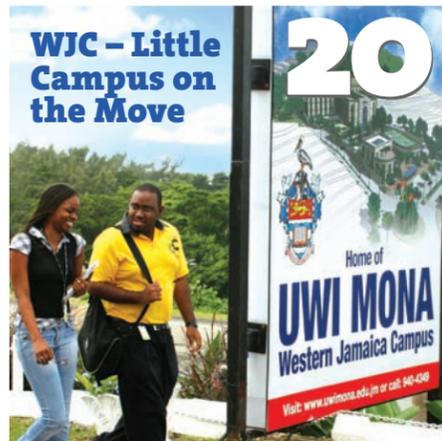
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 **MAY**

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**Mona Magazine** is a publication of the Marketing & Communications Office, The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica

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**UWI'S MISSION**  
The enduring mission of the University of the West Indies is to propel the economic, social, political and cultural development of West Indian society through teaching, research, innovation, advisory and community services, and intellectual leadership.

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# Positioning Mona at the Forefront of the Development Mission

In the six months since I have assumed office as Principal of The UWI, Mona Campus, I have committed myself to continuing and initiating efforts towards making the University not just the premier tertiary institution in the Caribbean, but one that has recognition on the global stage.

I believe that the University's ultimate aim is to provide our students with the skills and abilities to sustain a productive and prosperous life for themselves and their families, and to make meaningful contributions to society. It is our responsi-

bility to give our students the hope and the ability to fish for themselves, and to become front-runners in their respective fields, thus imparting their knowledge and expertise to future generations. It is through education that our society will achieve growth, and I am proud to now lead an institution that is at the forefront of this development mission.

This issue of the Mona magazine highlights some of the initiatives which the University is adopting to achieve these objectives. One commitment has been to develop a range of programmes in the creative industries, which will form the embryo of an industry in the creative arts, providing opportunities for our very creative young people to develop their diverse talents.

The new programmes in Fine Arts to be introduced at the Caribbean Institute of Media & Communication (CARIMAC) are a step in that direction; work underway in the Software Development Unit in the Department of Computing and the upcoming establishment of the Microsoft Innovation Centre will help to commercialise students' work, while postgraduate programmes like the Master's in agricultural entrepreneurship will assist our students to become more technologically savvy and managerially strong, capable of creating viable and profitable businesses.

Despite the substantial work that has been done in recent years, the University is in need of further transformation of its infrastructure, its administrative processes and its funding arrangements, all of which will support its transcendence into a world-class institution, comparable to the best of the Ivy League Schools. I am committed to ensuring that this goal is achieved.

During my tenure, I will ensure that our students and staff have access to technology that is comparable to that found in the best institutions worldwide. The funding has to be found, and will be found.

On my watch, the Mona Campus will focus on research projects that are aligned to national and regional development. To this end, we have established the Mona Office of Research and Innovation (MORI) to replace the former Office of Sponsored Research to lead the new direction.

MORI will provide support for all our researchers: support from the stage of idea to completion and writing of the research papers. But more importantly it will assist with the commercialisation of the intellectual property where



FROM THE PRINCIPAL

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## NEWS

MONA MAY 2014

appropriate. It will also ensure that our limited funds and resources are directed to those projects that have commercial value, as well as those that have the potential to contribute to Jamaica's social and economic development.

We are also moving to increase the number of partnerships with public and private entities. Already, The University has signed a contract with a North American Company for the commercial production of the Cardiac simulator developed in the Department of Surgery in collaboration with the Department of Computing.

Other agreements have been signed with a leading commercial bank and with the manufacturers' association with a view to encouraging applied research focusing on strategies for corporate renewal and transformation in the Caribbean region. The aim is to generate new knowledge to guide Jamaican firms on how to develop dynamic capabilities and strategies for profitable growth.

This issue also highlights work underway at the Western Jamaican Campus (WJC) which will be the focus of efforts to attract more international students to our University. In upcoming months, The UWI, Mona will acquire additional property in Montego Bay which will be developed to international standards through partnerships with local and international bodies.

However, none of this can be achieved without the significant financial resources that are required to fund the university. Against that background, The UWI, Mona campus intends to lead the discussions on funding of tertiary education in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

We recognise that a new funding model will have to be developed. In the meantime, however, the University must continue to diversify its sources of revenues through new approaches in its core business of teaching and learning, through a more meaningful engagement of alumni, and by taking a new approach to research and development.

**Archibald McDonald**  
Principal



The University of the West Indies and the Jamaica Manufacturers Association (JMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will serve as a framework for specific collaborative initiatives to be developed jointly by the manufacturing sector through the JMA and the Faculties, Schools and/or Research Centres of the University and its linkages. The initiatives include internships, R&D collaborations, sponsorships, information sharing, tailored training programs, development of policies and policy support, among others. Above, JMA President Brian Pengelley and Campus Registrar Dr. Camille Bell-Hutchinson, proudly display copies of the MOU as Deputy Principal, Professor Ishenkumba Kahwa (left) and Dean of the Faculty of Science & Technology, Professor Paul Reese look on.



Professor McDonald (centre) and Josh Stanley (left), founder of Strains of Hope, sign an MOU to facilitate research into the medicinal properties of marijuana (*cannabis sativa*). Under the terms of the MOU, researchers at The UWI, Mona and Strains of Hope will collaborate on research related to the development of the medical cannabis industry. The aim is to identify the biological and chemical properties of medical cannabis (or medical marijuana), with a view to determining how the plant works to treat disease or alleviate the symptoms of disease. The parties have also agreed to provide support with the drafting of legislation related to the decriminalization of marijuana for medical purposes, to the utilization of UWI's capabilities in analytical botanical chemistry and biological areas and UWI's greenhouse/atrium for small scale, controlled research growth, focusing on all aspects of strain, including growing conditions and DNA sequencing.

The signing was witnessed by Steve Bevan (right), founder of Strains of Hope. Standing behind them are Chairman of The UWI Cannabis Research Institute, Professor Rupert Lewis, and attorney-at-law for Strains of Hope, Jamaica, Franz Jobson.

# TAKING IT TO ANOTHER LEVEL



## COMPUTING DEPARTMENT SPREADS ITS WINGS

**T**he world has changed dramatically since the 1970s when the introduction of computers revolutionised everything, from banking to manufacturing, agriculture and sales. Today, computers dominate every single aspect of life.

Computing departments have had to reinvent themselves to keep pace with this

digital revolution. In line with this, Mona's Computing Department has undergone progressive transformation since it opened its doors to students in 1976.

Established as a sub-department of Mathematics, the Department of Computing went through several changes before launching out on its own five years ago.

Head of Department, Dr. Ezra Mugisa, a Ugandan national, has been with the department for 31 years. He has been Head of Department since 2010. During his tenure, the B. Sc. degree in Information Technology was launched in 2011, and the B. Sc. in Computer Systems Engineering in 2013 in collaboration with the School of Engineering. Additionally, the department recently started a major in Software Engineering.

### SPREADING ITS WINGS

The Computing Department engages in cross-faculty collaboration, for example, with the Faculty of Humanities and Education, the School of Engineering (Faculty of Science & Technology) and



Dr. Ezra Mugisa, head of the Computing Department

the Department of Management Studies (Faculty of Social Sciences), to offer courses to students. "Humanities and Education has a B.A. in Computer Science. The Department of Educational Studies has a B. Ed. specialisation in Information Technology and both send their students to us," Mugisa said. "You can now combine Information Technology, Economics and Education. Currently, we are in dialogue with the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) about possible collaboration," he added.

With a small staff of 11 lecturers, the Department currently has approximately 280 students enrolled in the first year of the B. Sc. degree programme, 123 in the second year and 60 in the final year. In the last semester of the third year,

students are required to do a capstone project which cements all they have learned over the three years. "The students are very creative; they do good projects, many of which have just been lying on the shelves," Mugisa said. In light of this, the Department established a Software Development Unit, mainly to commercialise students' work from the capstone project. There have been recent major successes from this effort.

One such project, supervised by Carl Beckford, featured a timetable design which the Exams Section and the Faculty of Science and Technology have found useful. Another project produced a recruitment programme for Mona's Admissions Section, while a logistics plan was arranged for a private sector company. These were supervised by Dr. Curtis Busby-Earle. He has two more this year, one for the Blood Bank and another for petrol stations.

Currently, the Computing Department is working on an open source electronic medical records software which they intend to pilot at UWI, Mona's Health Centre to render the organisation paperless. "We are piloting it there but it is really for Jamaica. We want to help computerise the entire health sector," stated Mugisa. "Our students don't just learn theory, they develop their abilities by taking on real problems and solving them. We are quite strong on problem solving," he added.

### INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The Department also started an internship programme two years ago, done during the summer of the second year for one month full-time or two months part-time. Though not compulsory, it allows the students to gain credits while testing their skills in the working world. "We identify organisations to place our students and we have been quite impressed with the feedback. All of the companies love our students. Some even

ask our students to come back for permanent jobs," Mugisa said.

Meanwhile, the Department's Master's degree programme has been growing steadily with an upturn in student enrollment. "This year, the numbers shot up – we got more students than we expected. Last year, we had just below 30 students; the class size is now about 50. A lot of our own graduates and some from the University of Technology and the Northern Caribbean University are flocking it.

"Word is out there that we have a good programme," Mugisa noted. "We also have overseas students from Haiti, Guyana and Samoa." The department also runs, in collaboration with the Department of Management Studies, the MSc in Computer-Based Management Information Systems.

The doctoral programme has also been proceeding well with emphasis on Software Engineering, Amorphous Computing, Knowledge Management Networking, Computer Animation and so that when the need arises we are ready. Research in Networking, in particular, is in great demand," Mugisa stated.

All of the programmes run by the Department are based on curriculum recommendation from professional, international bodies such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).

Students can also qualify for the Cisco programme, conducted by the Certified Cisco Network Association (CCNA) – an industry standard for networking. "This programme teaches our students skills that employers are looking for. They can acquire these certified skills while they are doing the B. Sc. and take it anywhere they go," Mugisa said. **M**



# WJJC

LITTLE CAMPUS ON THE MOVE

“We are a family at the WJC. Everyone is known by name and not by ID number.” This ringing endorsement of The UWI, Mona Western Jamaica Campus (WJC) in Montego Bay, St. James, comes from Odaine Thomas, WJC Chairman and President of the WJC Guild of Students. It highlights the pioneering spirit and camaraderie which pervades every aspect of the campus. “The WJC is small and intimate and, in everything, we do it with love, love in its widest sense – with caring. It is a work in progress to get everybody to understand that philosophy, but our new intake of students is catching on,” notes Director, Dr. Luz Longworth.



Odaine Thomas, WJC Chairman and President of the WJC Guild of Students.

Faculty of Social Sciences, representing 60 percent of the student population. Another 145 are registered in the Medical Sciences, 105 in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, 17 in Law, five in the Faculty of Science and Technology and 58 in graduate programmes. The graduation exercise in November 2013 was the largest since the inception of the campus, with 130 students awarded degrees – 15 with first-class honours.

Starting with a batch of 176 students and two full-time academic staff under the directorship of Michael Williams, the campus has been steadily increasing the scope of its programme offerings and its presence in the Montego Bay community. Currently, it hosts 15 full-time lecturers, an average of 35 part-time lecturers per semester, 12 administrative workers and has 805 students on roll.

## EXPANSION PROGRAMME

Dr. Longworth assumed duties as Director of the WJC in August 2012 with the mandate to continue the expansion programme and to position the WJC as the tertiary institution of choice in Montego Bay. In this regard, the campus has been improving its teaching and learning experience to include representation from all five faculties. The largest cohort of students – 475 – is enrolled in the

The 2012/2013 academic year saw the re-introduction of the first year of the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) programme with lectures streamed from the Mona campus in St. Andrew. Two new programmes – the B.Sc. in Information Technology and the B.Sc. in Human Resource Management were introduced. Additionally, as part of the effort to produce work-ready graduates, there has been an increase in internship programmes involving organisations in the Montego Bay area including Sandals Resorts International, Vista Print, Montego Bay Credit Union, Summerfest Productions Limited (organisers of Reggae Sumfest), and MBI Airports Limited. “The internships give the students a chance to be exposed to the real world, to put a lot of what they have learned into practice, and it allows the WJC to develop a rapport with the business sector,” Longworth said.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The students have also been extending their reach beyond the immediate campus environment. Many are involved in clubs on campus which have channeled them into community outreach programmes. These include providing pre-Christmas meals for over 200 street people, a beautification Labour Day project at Farm Primary and Junior High School, a treat for residents of the St. James Infirmary, a social skills programme for children in central Montego Bay, participation in the Granville Community Peace and Justice Forum and an outreach programme for the elderly at Flankers.

Additionally, the campus has staged cultural events, several public lectures and panel discussions on a range of themes. In November 2012, the campus received the Education Award for Excellence from the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Subsequently, in May 2013, Longworth was elected to the Board of Directors of the



Dr. Luz Longworth, Director, WJC (fourth from left), shares in the festivities with students at the WJC Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony last year.

Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Additionally, she was co-opted into the Board of Directors for the St. James Police Civic Committee (a support group for the police in St. James), and is also the chairperson of the awards sub-committee that chooses the top police officers in St. James. “The campus has to be a part of the Montego Bay community. The people of Montego Bay have to recognise that this is their space; they have to benefit from the intellectual space that The UWI provides,” Longworth said.

## CORE VALUES

All of this has been achieved with a set of core values in place: Respect, Integrity, Excellence and Love (RIEL), values which emerged from a staff retreat and were reinforced by a Keep it RIEL Campaign organised by the staff. “These are our values as a campus and as we add numbers we have to keep true to these values. Size makes a difference. We are lucky to have the opportunity to start small. We realise that growth can change things and there is the issue of how you grow. However, as new students are added, the core values must remain, no matter how large the student body becomes,” Longworth said.

A cadre of 40 student workers supports these values and plays an integral role in the management of day-to-day affairs. “Our students get a piece of the real world; we can speak on their ability to work in an academic environment. We also have to listen to them as they have good ideas on how to develop the campus; when the campus started, we were able to rely on them to provide a great deal of support,” Longworth said.

The student workers play a role even in controversial issues such as the payment of fees, an area of major focus for the campus. “This year, we helped about 20 students to pay their miscellaneous fees. We will be stepping up the effort as times are getting harder. We don’t want to see students in the system who are not able to complete their courses due to lack of funds,” the director stated.

Inderia Adjudah, Senior Administrative Assistant, has been on staff at the WJC since November 2008, three months after it opened. “Here, you know that you are contributing to something; you are helping to build The UWI and Mobay as the city of

choice. I’ve stayed with the WJC because there is always something new to do. The campus is always growing,” she said.

## FUTURE PLANS

Longworth aims to develop academic programmes relevant to the targeted areas for growth in Montego Bay. She plans to introduce more science and technology programmes, to develop areas of research and, as Mobay is the tourism mecca, to offer programmes in tourism that are needed by the industry. “My approach is to forge relationships with other tertiary institutions here – particularly the Montego Bay Community College, UTECH Western Campus and Sam Sharpe Teachers’ College as there is great synergy among us. We are on the public

purse, we have a responsibility to respond to the social needs and work together, even if there is friendly competition,” she said.

Longworth would also like to implement small, incremental changes despite the future plans to construct a new, bigger facility in addition to the existing WJC. These include the building of a Students’ Union, more shaded areas and gazebos for students to sit and relax and additional classrooms.

“These changes will allow for growth while awaiting the construction of the new campus. A period of 3-5 years is earmarked for the design of this facility with another 5 to 10 years to roll it out,” she said. **M**



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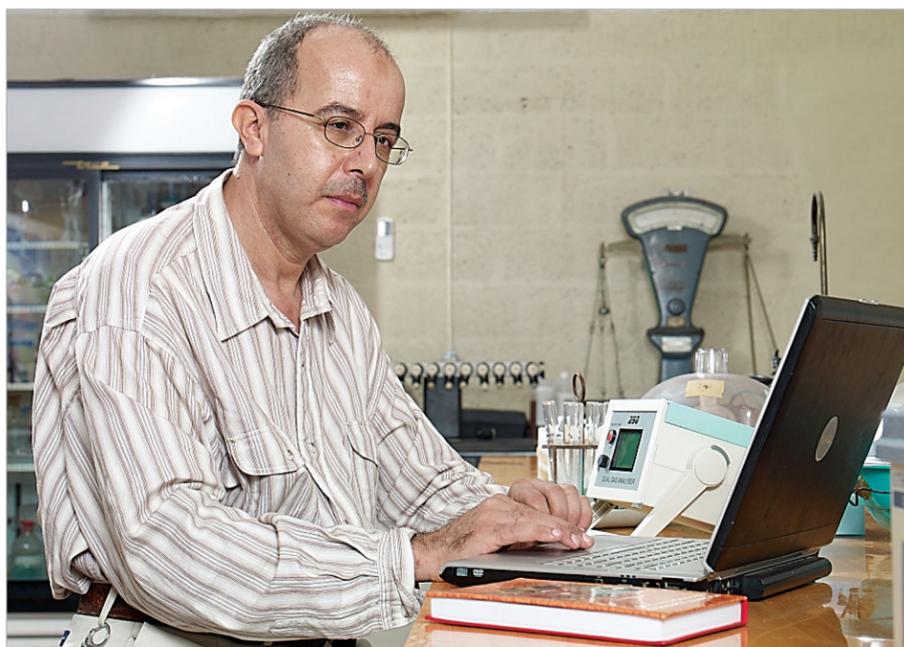
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LOOK TO THE BLUE

## THE M. SC. IN AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## A BRIDGE BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND MANAGEMENT



Prof. Nourreddine Benkeblia

Have you ever considered pursuing a course that will help you to manage your farming operation in a better way? Many farmers are not good businessmen; they fall short in management expertise as they tend to have degrees in agriculture but not in management. Others are good businessmen with an interest in farming but they lack agricultural skills, so they pay farmers to do the farming for them. A new course at Mona seeks to address this problem.

The M. Sc. degree in Agricultural Entrepreneurship started at Mona four years ago and has 28 graduates to date. Coordinated by Prof. Nourreddine Benkeblia, a native of Algeria, the course is designed to produce agricultural practitioners/farmers with strong technological and managerial skills and the ability to create

their own agricultural enterprises or successfully manage existing ones.

The first of its kind in Jamaica and the Caribbean, the programme combines two different disciplines – agriculture and management. Currently, 60 per cent of the students in the programme are graduates in Management Studies while 40 per cent pursued the B. Sc. in Agriculture or other sciences; however, the course is tailor-made to address this disparity. “The course is designed in the first semester to suit whatever lack there is in the student. Students who are already trained in management, pursue the agricultural science courses in the first semester, while those with agricultural science courses, do the management courses first,” Benkeblia said. Benkeblia brings a wealth of knowledge from his studies in Algeria, France

and Japan where he pursued a Ph. D. in Food Science and a Ph. D. degree in Plant Science, an M. Sc. in Food Science and B. Sc. degrees in Agriculture and Food Science. In addition to coordinating the M. Sc. programme, he lectures in different graduate courses – Post-Harvest Technology, Agro-Processing Technologies and Advanced Crop Production Technologies. Joining him is a complement of 14 lecturers, equipped with doctorates in Agriculture and Management, to administer the 24-month course offered in the evenings and on weekends. The course culminates in a six-month research project in Agricultural Management. “It is an applied research project. The students use their projects to address issues and to get hands-on experience in managing an agricultural enterprise. The project is of great benefit to where they work,” Benkeblia said.

## RELEVANCE TO LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Benkeblia feels that knowledge of the course could contribute significantly to the improvement of Jamaica’s agricultural sector. Commenting on the state of agriculture in Jamaica today, he noted that the local agricultural sector is performing well: “We have many farmers, most of our crops are locally grown and the majority of Jamaicans are not suffering from hunger. Anybody can walk along the roads, pick fruits and eat for free. This situation does not exist in most African countries.” However, he pointed to the need for organisation into small-farming systems and cooperatives. “On the local scene, we need to promote the small-farming systems which bring low input and good output and to organise the farmers into cooperatives. Cooperatives allow for quick sales from the farm to the consumer, the supermarket and the

popular markets and thus reduce losses,” Benkeblia said.

According to Benkeblia, the students are taught to improve the local agricultural system, but the task requires more students. He would like to see an increase in the number of students enrolled in the course. “I would like to have about 15 more students per year to organise and improve the agricultural sector. Without knowledge we cannot develop and improve any system,” the coordinator said.

## OUTSTANDING GRADUATES

Benkeblia noted that all of the graduates have been contributing positively, in one way or another, to the country’s agricultural development. One outstanding graduate is Audley Facey, Chief Livestock Research Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. He has found the course particularly beneficial to his job and has been technically guided by the knowledge gained from the programme.

He feels that the course is appropriate for our present agricultural climate. “Within our global village, practitioners and farmers can easily grasp and utilise the technical aspirations that the course offers in order to maintain a competitive advantage,” Facey said. On a personal level, he has also found it quite useful. “The course has enabled me to critically identify and analyse the hidden value chain processes within my work environment,” he added.

He is grateful for the course and highly rates its offerings. “The course includes economics and marketing strategies and allows the students to have a practical approach in terms of visiting established business places and seeing their processing facilities, such as meat processing and dairy enterprises, and getting facts first-hand. The research project is very challenging but with hard work it is manageable. These projects are based on real-life case studies, so we learn beforehand what can make a business succeed or fail,” he said.

Facey feels that the course motivates the young entrepreneur to move into his or her own business. He was spurred to do this course based on his desire to be academically equipped to manage an agricultural enterprise of his own. “Since I am in the field of agriculture, this programme was right up my street. My career goal is to go into mushroom production someday,” he said. **M**



Sheep being evaluated at the breeding farm in Hounslow, St. Elizabeth by Audley Facey (right), Chief Livestock Research Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and graduate of the programme.

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INTERVENTION BY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



Dr. Susan Anderson, lecturer at the School of Education at Mona

**A**riveting narrative has been unfolding at the Papine High School as some students with behavioural problems, on the brink of expulsion, are making an effort to improve their behaviours courtesy of an intervention project by the School of Education at Mona.

Neighboring Papine High School was beset with high incidents of students displaying a wide range of anti-social behaviours. These included but were not limited to: frequent fighting; alleged smoking of marijuana; truancy; gambling; uncontrollable, disruptive behaviour; willful destruction of school property; dishonesty and disrespect for school authority.

In 2005, overcome by the situation, the School's administration invited Educational Psychologist Dr. Susan Anderson, lecturer at the School of Education at Mona, to intervene.

Fast-forward to 2013 when the "Arresting Behavioural Problems in Schools" project (a clinical approach to helping students to deal with violence and aggression in the classroom), became an entrenched component in stemming the tide of aberrant student behavior in the School. Indeed, there are cases where students who displayed maladaptive behaviours went on to become prefects or student counselors, respectively, indicating the inherent benefit of the project to both the student and the School community. The grades of the participating students have also improved.

Reflecting on the intervention, Anderson, who is the coordinator of project at the School, explained that the effort was not about changing the environment around the students. Instead, the focus involved a unique strategy called cognitive behavioural management – a process of teaching persons skills and attitudes necessary to function and think in healthy ways. This process combines strategies from behaviour modification and behaviour and cognitive therapies.

"What this intervention does is give the students a better perspective of themselves – it helps them to look into themselves and act accordingly. So the focus for them is not trying to remove the barriers per se but to focus on overcoming them," Anderson stressed. Against this backdrop, a two-month programme was structured to include an interventionist, who first conducts a functional assessment, interviewing the student with the problem to identify the antecedents and consequences of the behaviour. "You look at what is affecting that particular student and determine the necessary coping strategies and mechanisms to arrest the problems," Anderson stated, adding that the interview also served to corroborate whatever reports are provided by the school on the student. The interventionist then uses behaviour skills-training procedures, such as role playing, modeling, rehearsals, praise and encouragement and feedback to teach coping and assertive skills. Included in the programme is also a focus group session to which "the students come willingly and speak freely about situations that they are having," Anderson said.

The participating students are also taught relaxation skills, which entail breathing exercises. A behavioural contract is then designed with the input of the students to motivate them to stay on track. The programme culminates in a non-residential summer camp on the Mona campus involving games, art and crafts, field excursions, rap sessions and personal development modules.

Some 20 students, drawn from Grades 7-9, participate annually in the project. Usually, the students selected have made the Dean of Discipline's list for repeated behavioural infractions and, at times, unmanageable types of behaviours. "We choose the worst students on the list and put them in the programme," said Brenda Stamp, Guidance Counselor at Papine High School since 1995, who works closely with the project.



Artwork done by the students at a camp

Parents of the students are also involved in the project. Some volunteer to become a part of it after giving the requisite permission for their children to participate. Some even attend focus group sessions and hear their children's angst as it relates to them. However, the approval of the student is sought before the parent can attend. In instances, this interaction has resulted in parents and children resolving issues and becoming friends.

Also critical to the success of the project is the involvement of final-year undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Education. The cadre of peer counselors attached to the project is drawn from these students sitting the core course *Dealing with Violence and Aggression in the Classroom* in the second semester of their third year. "Students would have gone through preliminary courses in psychology, so the ones doing this course are trained as peer counselors to work on this particular project and do it as a practicum," Anderson noted. This situation allows for one student to be paired with one Papine High student, thereby creating a sense of a clinical undertaking as it is more involved than a practicum.

The training of these UWI students not only involves helping

to change behaviour, but also encompasses assisting the students with school work, as sometimes this is the root cause of the students' behavioural problem. They are required to go to the school and work with the Papine students. However, there are times when those students go to The UWI for focus group sessions. "Getting them away from their school environment sometimes helps them to focus on their sense of self. They love to come to UWI and sometimes they ask if they can just look around



on the campus. It also helps in terms of them visualising attending the institution," Anderson noted.

Annually, when the project comes to an end, and The UWI students graduate and return to their respective islands or places of abode, there are cries of abandonment by the Papine students. This occurs even after they are told about and prepared for the inevitable separation. Anderson said that while some peer counselors stay in touch with their students,

there are others that break off completely despite her encouraging them to stay connected, which is a downside of the project.

This ongoing intervention continues to lead to a positive behaviour change in most of the participating students. "When we look at the trend of the behaviour change, we see that the students we have worked with in the clinical setting have gone on to finish school and that is what we are most happy about," Anderson said. **M**

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# BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO PORTLAND'S COASTLINE

ALLIGATOR HEAD MARINE LAB



Juvenile fish on Alligator Head Reef



“I learned to swim and snorkel on the reef at Alligator Head in Portland and my children have also learned to swim and snorkel here; however over the years I have watched diseases killing the corals, how hurricane Gilbert smashed the reef to pieces, how overfishing took its toll... I grieve for the reef”.

With these words, philanthropist and art collector, Francesca von Habsburg, explained how her distress at the state of the reef and bay of San San, Portland

galvanised her into action, resulting in her opening up her property at Alligator Head in San San, Portland to facilitate the establishment of a marine laboratory aimed at conserving and enhancing the natural coastal and marine resources in eastern Portland.

Francesca von Habsburg is the founder and chairman of the Vienna-based foundation, Thyssen Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA 21). The foundation's TBA-21 Academy integrates art, science and sustainability, a fellowship bringing artists, scientists and thinkers together at sea.

Through its numerous projects the foundation aims to raise important ecological, economic and social issues that affect the ocean.

This particular project is being undertaken under a three-year agreement reached between Habsburg's TBA 21 Academy and The UWI, Mona. The UWI, Mona already owns and operates two marine labs, the Port Royal Marine Laboratory in Kingston, and the Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory in St. Ann. The establishment of a third lab on Jamaica's east coast will allow the University access to an under-explored part of the island's marine environment.

The MOU, outlining the scope and nature of the work to be undertaken at the lab,



Coral nursery

was signed by Principal of The UWI, Mona, Professor Archibald McDonald and Ms von Habsburg, on behalf of TBA 21, at a ceremony held in Portland in March 2014. The aim of the lab is to raise awareness through research and public outreach in a bid to reverse the destruction of the environment and ultimately revitalise the reefs and protect the underwater sea life.

Four of Jamaica's top marine researchers have committed their time and expertise to lead the research programme: Professor Dale Webber, Dr. Mona Webber, Dr. Karl Aiken and Dr. Dayne Buddo.

Areas of emphasis include lionfish control, coastal water quality, fish sanctuary establishment, reef herbivore research, reef community monitoring, and coral restoration.

Initially, work will focus on conservation of the marine environment at Alligator Head and their surrounding areas, including threat minimisation/elimination, restoration of ecosystems, monitoring, as well as the development of best practices for the Portland area.

“As an island, it is even more important to focus on marine protection, especially with

so many people depending on the coral reef and its associated habitats for their livelihoods ... our actions on land directly impact the marine life that surrounds us, therefore it's critical that each of us share that same sense of responsibility and is conscious of which impact their actions have. There is still much to protect, and it's only with a strong commitment by the local community to conserve and protect its resources, supported by experience and scientific methodology provided by The UWI, that we can have any real chance of returning the area to its former splendour and vitality,” says Buddo. **M**

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## ICENS PIONEERS RESEARCH

# What's in a Lionfish?



BY  
LESLIE  
HOO  
FUNG

The invasion of the red lionfish, *Pterois volitans*, represents a growing ecological threat to Caribbean waters, Jamaica included. As a voracious predator, the lionfish has been observed to reduce the population of small, native reef fish by up to ninety percent. This has implications, and potentially serious ones, for fish stock of commercial importance, whether as food or as part of the tourism industry. With no natural predators in their ever-increasing range of

the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and a reproductive rate that is more rapid than native species, the need for control of this invasive species was immediately obvious. One of the control strategies and indeed the most popular, it seems, is to physically remove and consume the lionfish. Extensive ecological studies have been conducted on lionfish and the public has been sensitised about its venom and its effects, but although the public is being encouraged to eat this species, nutritional assessment had been limited to analysis of omega-3 fatty acids and ciguatera toxin.

This presented a unique opportunity for Leslie Hoo Fung and Johann Antoine of the International Centre for Environmental and Nuclear Sciences (ICENS). From an aspect of food safety, Hoo Fung and Antoine thought it necessary to examine the potential for exposure to potentially toxic metals, as well as essential elements, via lionfish consumption. It is indeed rare that the chance to conduct any sort of analysis presents itself just as a food is being introduced to the diet of a country or region. It is rarer still to be the first to conduct this type of research which is what these scientists discovered when they conducted the literature review on the proposed research, and were especially surprised to find that mercury, typically a primary concern with fish consumption, had never been assessed in lionfish. This further bolstered in their minds the rationalisation for the study and set them on a path that would lead to the first publication of its kind. The researchers approached friend and colleague Dr. Dayne Buddo of the Discovery Bay Marine Lab (DBML), who ran the National Lionfish Project, regarding a collaborative effort. Dr. Buddo graciously provided lionfish samples and along with their colleague at ICENS, Charles Grant, they subsequently analyzed these samples for 25 essential, non-essential and toxic elements.

Given that lionfish is still not widely consumed by the Jamaican public, exposure was calculated using estimates of Jamaican consumption of other sea fish. So what did the researchers find? It seems that the muscle of lionfish, the main edible portion, would provide only modestly in terms of trace element nutrition but more importantly would not contribute significantly to the dietary exposure to potentially hazardous elements, including mercury.



Johann Antoine



Leslie Hoo Fung

In assessing the risk of exposure to mercury and its effects, the concentration of not only mercury, but selenium, must be determined. Selenium can mitigate the effects of mercury and it was found that the selenium content of lionfish was in molar excess to that of mercury, which is a positive indication of the safety of lionfish. It seems that from an elemental nutrition standpoint that lionfish is safe to eat. Since this publication, the *United States Geological Survey* (USGS) has published a peer-reviewed journal article citing the Jamaican publication which acknowledges that the research conducted at the University of the West Indies was the first of its kind. The USGS publication also indicated that the lionfish has lower mercury levels than other predatory fish that are already widely consumed as food, further reiterating what has been determined in the Jamaican publication.

Cont'd on page 28



Timar Jackson (right) is congratulated by Monna Principal Professor Archibald McDonald and Campus Registrar, Dr Camille Bell-Hutchinson as his smiling mother Janet Powell looks on.

## 2ND TIME A CHARM

Twenty-four year old recipient of the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship for 2014, Timar Jackson strongly believes that young people must go after their dreams despite obstacles or temporary setbacks.

Pressing social problems for him include education and the social environment that many of our children grow up in. "If we could get them to develop better social habits, for example, developing a greater respect for self and one another, and not thinking that the world owes them anything it will empower every Jamaican to pursue whatever they believe in and we'll have a better Jamaica," he said.

The first--class Actuarial Science UWI graduate said that "as students/graduates we should realise that our success is not only due to our own abilities, but also the many other persons such as teachers, parents and society who all played their part." He added: "at the end of the day, we should contribute to solving the pressing problems in the society."

Jackson, originally from Bull Bay in St. Andrew, with three older brothers and a younger sister, drew appreciation for determination from his single parent-

headed household, run by his hard-working mother.

Describing himself as someone who also has tremendous focus, the fact that

MEET

**Timar  
Jackson**

2014 RHODES SCHOLAR

he did not get the Rhodes Scholarship on the first try in 2011 did not deter him from his goal.

"This was my second time applying for the Rhodes Scholarship. I applied during my final year of university and was not successful. Going in this time, it was the last opportunity because the stakes were higher, and it would be the last time I would qualify as a candidate due to the age criteria. To be short-listed you must be no older than 25 years the following year October," Jackson explained.

Jackson reminisced: "I didn't feel more confident than the other candidates. I tried not to think of the other candidates but to think about my strengths during the interview process."

"I am disciplined, focused and believe in balance. I also believe that every experience, even the unfavourable ones, are valuable. I have a strong interest in personal development of my whole self," he said. Initially registered as an economics student at UWI, Jackson made that im-

"the main thing is to focus on understanding the basic concepts, practising and making connections."

portant change of major to actuarial science because he discovered that he had a special love for the subject.

"I had a strong appetite for mathematics, so I switched my major from economics to actuarial science. I still have an interest in economic matters – that did not change. Actuarial science is closely linked to economic matters and the skill set can be applied to solve numerous problems in the economic environment," Jackson noted.

A former Vauxhall High head boy and Ardenne High School sixth former, Jackson has only high praises for his secondary school teachers who provided the critical learning environment that shaped his love for studying.

Now focused on giving back, he said, "I had teachers who believed in me and my abilities before I believed in them myself. They have been able to push me beyond the limits of what I believed I could do. I appreciate the guidance from my teachers both at Ardenne and Vauxhall High. "A group of friends and I recently started a mathematics outreach project at Vauxhall. We aim to at least double the number of students passing the CSEC math exam at the school for the next sitting,"

Students are exposed to an intensive mathematics programme every third Saturday for eight hours, and Jackson says that there has been a positive response from students as well as school administration.

Denying that mathematics is a difficult subject to learn, he pointed out: "the main thing is to focus on understanding the basic concepts, practising and making connections. We strive to make a connection between the topics the students learn by showing how one topic builds on previous ones and relating them to tangible everyday life scenarios."

Cont'd on page 21



The only one of its kind in the Caribbean, UWI's Sports Medicine Clinic is dedicated to the treatment of competing athletes.

Three years ago when Matthew Parchment began The UWI's Master of Science degree programme in Sports and Exercise Medicine (Physiotherapy) he would never have imagined that on graduation, in 2013, he would not only accompany Jamaica's top athletes to the 2013 IAAF World Championships in Moscow, Russia, but also become the resident sports physiotherapist at The UWI Sports Medicine Clinic.

Matthew is one of six of the first batch of students to have graduated from the Physiotherapy programme in November 2013.

Having the degree was among the criteria for selection to accompany Jamaica's team to the Championships. "I got to fully utilise the skills which I gained while doing my Master's," he stated. The exposure garnered from the programme's 'focused and involved' training as well as close interaction with renowned experts in the field

was rewarding. "If you want to advance in this field I think you should pursue this post-graduate degree because, trust me, it was like day and night compared to my bachelor's degree [in physiotherapy]," he declared.

The development of the Physiotherapy programme, which complements the six-year-old Master's of Sports Medicine Programme for Physicians, is indicative of a growing acceptance that sports medicine, inclusive of sports physiotherapy, is now a



HRH Prince Edward officially opens The UWI Sports Therapy Clinic on March 4, 2014

full-fledged specialty requiring a structured training programme.

Sports Medicine Physician and Orthopedic Surgeon, Dr. Akshai Mansingh, is the Director of the Sports Medicine Programme at The UWI, having completed training in sports medicine in Australia. He says he came to recognise that, with the quality and calibre of athletes in the Caribbean, the university needed to produce persons to assist these athletes, who were of a similar ilk.

The specialty of sports medicine goes beyond just injury detection and management and includes the use of exercise to enhance performance and to prevent injuries.

"Exercise is used not only in sports to make athletes perform better by legally doing things like special exercises for their specific needs or assessing where they are deficient. But it also has to do with the use of exercise for controlling



Director of the Sports Medicine Programme at The UWI, Dr. Akshai Mansingh (left) and resident sports physiotherapist, Matthew Parchment

conditions like diabetes, hypertension, obesity and osteoporosis. So the use of exercise prescriptions, as they are called, to control these non-communicable diseases is as much in the realm of sports medicine as looking after athletes, weekend warriors [athletes] or recreational athletes," Dr. Mansingh clarified.

**COLLABORATIVE EFFORT**

Only a handful of countries offer post-graduate programmes in sports medicine and even fewer dedicate courses solely to physiotherapists. Currently, The UWI is the only Caribbean university delivering such a programme, through a collaborative effort between the Division of Sports Medicine and the Section of Physiotherapy.

The programme was set up with the input of some 73 lecturers and specialists in the field drawn from within and outside of the Caribbean. Many visited and

spent weeks with Mansingh and his team to develop the programme and also to teach. The result was a programme structured so as to facilitate the students being able to pace themselves depending on work requirements, among other things.

The programme is offered through a combination of online and face-to-face instruction. Upon completion, the graduate should be able to formulate and supervise exercise programmes for all patients; function as a team physiotherapist and team leader coordinating other medical colleagues; apply the latest knowledge in sports medicine and enhancement; and participate in Sports and Exercise Medicine research.

Students get the opportunity to interface with some of the top persons in the world in sports medicine who come in

as external examiners. "This is a reassuring thing for us, because these people have heavily endorsed this programme to be as good as anywhere else in the world," Mansingh said proudly.

Students have met the likes of Dr. Craig Ranson, physiotherapist, lecturer and author, who has been a consultant to a variety of United Kingdom and international sporting organisations including the Wales Rugby Team, the English and Wales Cricket Board and the International Cricket Council. They have also met the guru of the field, Professor Karim Khan, who is the co-author of the definitive work on sports medicine Clinical Sports Medicine and editor of the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

**HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST**

Apart from Matthew, the other graduates from the programme include Damion Martin (Cayman Islands), Kereen Sherwood (Bahamas), Ariane Mangar and Beverley Nelson (Guyana) and Marcia Swyer-Forbes (Jamaica), who holds the distinction of being among the first class of physiotherapists to graduate in 1972 and among the first batch of graduates from the post-graduate programme in 2013.

Since then, there has been another 15 students who are at varying stages of completion. It is expected that by the end of 2014 there will be some 16 other graduates from the programme.

Mansingh is not surprised at the high level of interest in the programme. He says many persons are seeking opportunities to specialise both in medicine and physiotherapy as there is a demand for specialists. "I think the other thing that has been extremely satisfying is that anybody who comes across these graduates recognises that there is a marked difference in approach and care and even in results. We're hoping that our graduates will go on and create a niche for themselves," he said. **M**

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MONA OFFICE OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION (MORI)

# REPOSITIONING RESEARCH AT THE UWI, MONA CAMPUS



Dr. Georgiana Gordon-Strachan (centre) flanked by MORI staffers Lorna Thomas-Black and Trudy Ann Samuels

**T**eaching, research and outreach have been the strategic focus of The UWI, Mona Campus for many years, with research being the measure of excellence setting Mona far above its tertiary competitors. Faculty-led Research and Innovation have therefore been high on the agenda for The UWI 2012-2017 Strategic Plan, and the Mona Campus Operational plan highlights the development of supportive policies, processes and incentives for research, the increase in peer reviewed publication and citations as well as commercializing research as strategic objectives for the next five-year period.

**“We aim to create an enabling, supportive and proactive environment which promotes an increase in research output, research grant funding and the commercialisation of research products.”**

Against that background, Mona has established an Office of Research for Innovation (MORI) to lead the repositioning of research at The UWI as part of an initiative to transform the institution into a research-led, result-driven organisation. MORI replaces the former Office of Sponsored Research which has been restructured with this new focus.

MORI will guide a research enterprise which drives innovative research

aligned to the development of all sectors of the national, regional and global economy. It will do this by providing support to researchers, from the conceptualisation of an idea to the completion of the research project.

The office will provide support on project proposal development, grant writing, project management and protection of intellectual property. It will also assist researchers with the commercialisation of intellectual property.

Specifically, MORI is mandated to:

- Identify funding opportunities and promote them to UWI’s researchers;
- Liaise with funding sources and partners on behalf of researchers;
- Review and approve all research proposals before submission to external entities;
- Review and sign research proposals on behalf of The UWI, Mona or as a delegate of the Campus Principal;
- Provide comprehensive application guides;
- Conduct workshops, information sessions, and agency site visits to help researchers understand policies and requirements;
- Coordinate the submission of patent applications;
- Promote research at the UWI Mona Campus in expositions and interview opportunities.

MORI is headed by Dr. Georgiana Gordon-Strachan, who will work closely with the Deputy Deans (Research) of each Faculty and with the Campus Coordinator, Graduate Studies & Research to meet its objectives.

Gordon-Strachan received her PhD in Biochemistry from The UWI and her MSc in Health Policy, Planning and Financing from the London School of Economics and Political Science and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is the former Director of Epidemiological Research and Analysis at the Ministry of Health (Jamaica).

Earlier, Dr. Gordon-Strachan served as senior lecturer in epidemiology in the Health Research Resource Unit of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, UWI, and during her tenure the publication rate of the Faculty of Medical Sciences doubled.

Dr. Gordon-Strachan is an advocate for the conversion of evidence-based research findings into public policy. She assumed duties as MORI Director in October 2013, and welcomes this new challenge.

“We aim to create an enabling, supportive and proactive environment which promotes an increase in research output, research grant funding and the commercialisation of research products of the University of the West Indies, Mona,” she says. **M**

*JACKSON from page 17* “For example, when doing algebra, most of the principles are the same as when we are doing computations with numbers. For instance, when I am working with algebraic fractions I do a quick revision of computations involving fractions that contain actual numbers to show how the same principles apply,” Jackson said.

Presently an actuarial analyst at Sagikor Life Jamaica Limited, Jackson said: “Sagikor has helped me in getting vital experience in the actuarial field and to apply the knowledge I gained from my studies to solve real life problems relating to life insurance. The experience has also given me greater insight into how the financial sector operates and the critical role it plays in the economy.

“The day after I won the Rhodes Scholarship, it was pure excitement at the office. My department was paid a special visit by our President and CEO Richard Byles and other executives and team members who all expressed their congratulations,” Jackson added. Right now, he is focused on preparing himself to live his dream of studying at the prestigious Oxford University in the United Kingdom, developing his world-view by meeting international students, and walking away with his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Mathematical and Computational Finance.

“I am excited, but I have a far way to go. This (scholarship) is a great opportunity – and promises a life-changing experience that I would not have been able to have otherwise.” **M**

## 2 QUIZ TEAM CHAMPS TO GET UWI SCHOLARSHIPS



Assistant Registrar for Student Recruitment, Marjorie Bolero Haughton, joins in congratulating members of the Kingston College team, winners of the 2014 Schools' Challenge Quiz Competition, from left: Jayzon Brooks, Kadeem Campbell, Kareem Clarke and Scott Lee-Young (Captain). The UWI, Mona contributes scholarships to the competition as part of its outreach initiatives.

# MICROSOFT INNOVATION CENTRE FOR MONA CAMPUS

A new Microsoft Innovation Centre (MIC) – the first of its kind in Jamaica – is set to open at The UWI, Mona Campus by mid-2014.

The Centre will be a department of The UWI, designed to attract and cultivate a body of talented Jamaicans in the realm of software development, foster innovation and stimulate a local software economy. The UWI has partnered with the Government of Jamaica, the Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS) and other organisations in this venture.

The MIC Jamaica will be housed in the old personnel building beside the Mona Cooperative Credit Union, on Gibraltar Camp Way, close to the Post Office gate. One of the oldest buildings on campus, the architectural re-design is currently being finalised. Significant renovation is planned, with the intent to retain some of the history on the outside with modern features inside.

Colin Webster, head of the Mona Business Support Services (MBSS) and coordinator of the MIC says the main aim of the Centre is to promote



UWI, Mona Principal Prof. Archibald McDonald at the launch of the Microsoft Innovation Centre (MIC)

development in a number of areas, primarily technical application development.

“We want to kick start a mobile application revolution in Jamaica,” Webster said. “The global application economy goes into billions of dollars.

We have already established that we have the raw talent to participate in this arena, but there is currently insufficient visibility and consequently allure to this arena. We want to achieve some success and laud it. This Centre is a step towards achieving a foothold for getting the Jamaican developer on the international platform.”

The facility will offer students, the wider UWI community and the general population, the ability to form companies. “The interesting thing about applications is that you don’t have to be techno-savvy to get

into it. It all starts with an idea and anybody – whether you are a ‘technophile’ or not – once you have conceived an idea, the opportunity will exist to convert that idea into an application and earn some revenue for yourself and the country,” Webster said.



MIC Jamaica hopes to attract significant investments and national focus in the area of technology to stimulate the underlying talent of the local developer community.

“The facility will apply to any type of student and anybody with an idea. We need effective mechanisms to uncover these ideas. The social scientists may have an edge in terms of their dreams and visions, while the computer scientist will shine with the implementation. The facility will provide a systematic way of converting those ideas into reality. Our first job is to

inspire people to get involved,” Webster said.

While the physical facility for the MIC Jamaica will be based at Mona, there will be activity throughout the country, especially in areas with a high concentration of developers. Additionally, there will be outreaches to high schools throughout the island.

MIC Jamaica plans to succeed in its mission by developing strong partnerships with local private and public sector organisations; delivering professional training to students, Information Technology professionals and executives; identifying business opportunities for technical entrepreneurs and creating a world-class hub for developing apps.

UWI, Mona Principal Prof. Archibald McDonald welcomes the MIC Jamaica: “The Microsoft Innovation Centre provides the Jamaican economy with an opportunity and the much-needed capacity to foster a stronger and more utilitarian relationship between the growth and development of our nation and its innovative and technological advancement. The UWI, Mona, along with our public and private sector collaborators, fully supports this new and ground-breaking initiative that will certainly enhance the prospects of Jamaica’s socio-economic redevelopment for years to come.”

According to Webster, the Department of Computing, Mona also stands to benefit: “We are in the process of negotiating direct linkages with the Computing Department and seeing how we can impact on the curriculum to better prepare the students for the opportunity that lies in this sphere.”

Webster also feels that MIC Jamaica could assist in providing employment for Jamaican youth. “There is high unemployment among the youth. In this sphere, the youth not only have an opportunity, their early exposure to mobile applications better positions them to understand the market and the potential appeal of new application ideas,” Webster said. ■

## ANNUAL SCHOLARS’ BREAKFAST SHOWCASES EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT RESEARCH CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING GRADUATE SCHOLARS

The Office of Graduate Studies & Research hosted its annual Scholars’ Breakfast on March 13, 2014 in continuation of its efforts to create a community of scholars with an accent on research and recognise the contribution of research to solving issues and providing solutions. Top performing undergraduates from all Faculties were invited to attend the Breakfast, which aimed to showcase the scholars to the wider UWI community and the public at large.

The main award presented at the Annual Breakfast was the Most Outstanding Thesis Award. The 2012/13 Most Outstanding Thesis Award recipient was Alexia Harvey (PhD Biotechnology), for her work, *Chemical Modification of Yam (Dioscorea sp.) Starches and their Potential Use in Pharmaceutical Formulations*, which received high commendation. Dr. Harvey along with the Yam Group led by her Supervisor, Professor Helen Asemota, worked on identifying yam starches to replace traditional starches, and especially cornstarch, which is expensive. Starches are a critical component in the pharmaceutical industry and hence the work has great economic potential.

Three other awards were presented at the breakfast. Director of the Centre for Marine Sciences and James Moss-Solomon Professor of Environmental Management, Dale Webber, received the award for Fostering a Culture of Excellence in Research Supervision in recognition of his contribution to the development and support of good supervisory practice over the last two years. Supervision is recognised as a critical component of research degree output and Professor Webber has been described by his students as a good supervisor and was identified as a best practice. He has led supervision workshops in all faculties offering research degrees (six in two years) to improve the practice of supervision.

A new element to the Scholars’ Breakfast was the award for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Graduate Students, which was presented to the School of Education. It was noted that between 2009 and 2013, the School of Education graduated 31 research degrees, of which 28 were PhDs and almost all were finished in the time stipulated by the regulations. The high rate of conversion from MPhil to PhD, in particular, was noteworthy, the citation read. ■



Professor Dale Webber receives commendations from Pro Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies, Professor Yvette Jackson.



Dr. Alexia Harvey is congratulated by (l-r) Coordinator for Graduate Studies & Research, Professor Denise Eldemire Shearer, Minister of State in the Ministry of Science & Technology, Hon. Julian Robinson, and Mona Principal Professor Archibald McDonald.



Dr. Moses Peart (right) collected the award on behalf of the School of Education.

# UWI LAUNCHES ANTI-CANCER SCREENING LAB

**T**he University of the West Indies, Mona has launched an anti-cancer screening laboratory which will position Jamaica to participate in the field of cancer research. Housed at UWI's Natural Products Institute, (NPI) the laboratory is the first dedicated anti-cancer laboratory in Jamaica and will foster inter-disciplinary research on natural products which can be used for the treatment of cancer.

Speaking at the launch ceremony held Tuesday, April 29, 2014, NPI's Executive Director, Dr. Rupika Delgoda, noted that the new facility would allow researchers to collaborate across disciplines to do initial screening of Jamaican plants including endemics, marine organisms, and microorganisms to identify those which might have medicinal qualities.

She added that the work of the laboratory would be to test for products that could be used in the treatment of cancer that block the viability of cancer cells without impacting normal cells.

In addition, it would search for products that have cancer preventive properties. Further, Dr. Delgoda stated that over time, this effort would be extended to include the study of Caribbean biodiversity as well as research for commercial benefit to cover nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.



Executive Director of the Natural Products Institute (NPI), Dr. Rupika Delgoda (right) examines equipment for the UWI's anti-cancer lab with Minister of Health, Dr. Fenton Ferguson during the launch of the lab on April 29.

The Executive Director remarked that over 120 chemical substances have been derived from plants used as drugs, with 75% of these discovered by studying the use of these plants in traditional medicine. She pointed to the local periwinkle plant which is nowadays produced synthetically and used as a component in drugs in cancer therapy and as immunosuppressive drugs.

Other projects that will continue at the Institute, include the study of the interaction between pharmaceutical medications and the natural herbs used by many persons to self-medicate; study of natural products with potential to overcome pesticidal resistance by malaria and dengue mosquitos; and the development of biopesticides.

The NPI Executive Director pointed out that Jamaica had been identified as a "biological hot spot", with some 23% of plants on the island being endemic, that is, not found anywhere else in the world. She added that some 348 plant species found in Jamaica had been listed as having medicinal qualities, with 193 of

Jamaican plants having been studied by The UWI, over the past 50 years. Crude extracts of 80 plants have had some bioactivity, that is, had proven to have antidiabetic, anti-hypertensive, pesticidal, and antimicrobial properties.



Minister of Health, Dr Fenton Ferguson cuts the ribbon to officially open the anti-cancer screening laboratory. Looking on (l-r) are former Principal of The UWI, Mona, Professor Sir Kenneth Hall, Dean of the Faculty of Science & Technology, Professor Paul Reese, and Executive Director of the Natural Products Institute, Dr. Rupika Delgoda.

## UWI STUDENTS MEDAL AT TAEKWON-DO EVENT



UWI, Mona students were among members of the the Jamaica Combined Martial Arts Team that was invited by Team USA Taekwon-Do Fitness in Englewood, New Jersey, USA to participate in their first international event for 2014. Team Jamaica won the team challenge. Five members of the team who are UWI students medalled at the event. They are: Tashana Grannum, gold; Akeem Lawrence, silver; Richard Stone, silver; Maya McKay, bronze and Adrian Moore, bronze.

Above, members of the team pose with their trophy: Back row (l-r) Kevin Brown, Nicholas Dusard, Allando Ebanks, Adrian Moore (UWI); Akeem Lawrence (UWI); Nicholai Reid. 2nd row (l-r) Scott Wright, Tye Mckay, Daron Harrison(UWI) Akino Lindsay. Front row: Richard Stone (UWI) and Demar King.

### ANTI-CANCER LAB from page 24

She noted that to date, the Natural Products Institute has examined over 30 plants and isolated compounds, and has one full U.S. patent, and two each of full and preliminary U.S. patent applications pending for value-added extracts and biopesticides.

The keynote speaker at the launch event was Minister of Health, the Hon. Fenton Ferguson. He stated that the launch of the anti-cancer screening research laboratory was a step in the right direction, and would be an important part of the Government's focus on improving the early detection and treatment of cancer. He said work had already begun in this regard with improvements in the histopathology and cytopathology services offered. The Minister also promised the Government's support in identifying funds to be used in the laboratory's research effort. **M**

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