

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
EDUCATION

MONA

Year ending July 31, 2007



Professor Aggrey Brown, CD, BA Hamline, MA, PhD Princeton
– Dean

Overview

The Physical Infrastructure

One of the main features of the 2006/07 academic year for the Faculty of Humanities and Education was coping with the fall out from the budgetary crisis which the Mona campus had to contend in the academic year the 2003/2004 when the Campus budget was cut by the Government of Jamaica.

The crisis occurred simultaneously with the strategic decision to increase the intake of students to meet the Government's target of 20% enrolment of all eligible tertiary level students. Unexplained fluctuations in the number of students accepting offers of a place in the Faculty in subsequent years up to the year under review resulted in a severe shortage of space in all departments of the Faculty and coming to a head in the 06/07 academic year. The problem was particularly acute because no infrastructural and other supports were funded nor put in place to accommodate the increased intake of students in the Faculty.

In some instances the resulting shortage of space threatens sustaining the quality of programmes offered by some departments. Some academic staff offices are now being shared by faculty, which in turn, affects the ability of staff to perform their required counseling and student advising functions in privacy. The only exceptions to this unacceptable practice within the FHE are the departments of Library and Information Studies and Educational Studies. Also, there is an acute lack of classroom space in the School of Education.

Additionally, and generally across the Faculty, the deterioration of the physical plant placed a strain on the budget resulting in over-spending on plant maintenance. Even though there was a recognized need to retrofit some walkways and entrances to staff offices with ramps to accommodate disabled persons, the work to do so had to be postponed until the start of the new (07/08) financial year.

With great expectation that the Strategic Transformation Team-funded extension of the Faculty's Graduate Students' Lounge would have been completed before the end of the first semester of the year, the Contractor began site preparation and excavation of the foundation only to abort the job after being physically threatened by outsiders demanding work. This resulted in an increase in the estimate for doing the job to include the added cost of security. The job also had to be re-tendered with the result that, two years after being awarded the grant by

the STT, work is just now starting in earnest on the project.

On a more positive note, the Faculty-supported and STT-funded modification and renovation of the Science and Mathematics Learning Center was completed within budget and in time to host the first programme initiative of the Center in the summer.

Transformational Academic Initiatives

A number of activities furthered the strategic objectives of the Faculty during the year consonant with the overall strategic objectives of the University. The most important of these which will be highlighted here, involved the continued integration of the School of Education (SOE) into the Faculty following merger of the Faculties of Education and Arts and General Studies.

The first of these was a joint meeting of Heads of Teachers Colleges and the Faculty, hosted by the Dean of the Faculty and addressed by the Principal, to clarify the new relationship of the Mico College and Shortwood Teachers' College with the University of the West Indies. The meeting also reconfirmed the earlier strategic decision of the Faculty to divest undergraduate degree programmes over time to the Teachers' Colleges in order to allow the Faculty to concentrate on Post graduate studies. The result is that the Mico College now offers the undergraduate degree in Primary Education and Shortwood Teachers College, the degree in Early Childhood Education. Both are joint degrees but as of the 2007/08 academic year the former will be fully relinquished to become a sole Mico degree.

The second related activity was the initiative to rationalize the structure of the SOE so that it would be enabled to function optimally and to lead the education transformation process in Jamaica in particular. However, since internal consensus could not be reached between the parties most directly involved as to how best to achieve this, the Vice Chancellor mandated the Campus Principal to seek the assistance of external consultants to advise on the way forward. To this end, two senior members of the Temple University department of Education were appointed as consultants.

Following extensive interviews and discussions with all parties concerned, together with an examination of copious documentation,

the consultants submitted their report and recommendations to the Principal and Vice Chancellor at the end of April.

The major recommendation, endorsed by both Principal and Vice Chancellor, is that the SOE be restructured and transformed into a Graduate School of Education with the Institute of Education fully integrated into the School which should be headed by a Deputy Dean who should be directly answerable to the Dean of the FHE. The new structure of the SOE is to be phased in beginning in the 2007/08 academic year and with the assistance of a local consultant.

A third noteworthy academic initiative was the absorption of the Change From Within project into the Department of Educational Studies (DES) curriculum for the training of teachers with full agreement and endorsement of the Campus F&GPC. This innovative project implemented over a period of years in a number of Kingston's inner-city schools, has successfully addressed the problem of violence in the schools by, among other things, integrating the surrounding communities into the activities of the schools in collaboration with parents, teachers and school administrators. The principles and techniques gleaned from the project will be integrated into the DES's curriculum for the training of teachers by the project director who is to be appointed a full time member of the DES' teaching staff. The timing of this development was also propitious since the SOE had itself set up a working committee to lead the process of curriculum review and renewal within the School.

Other Academic Initiatives

A new interdisciplinary bachelor's degree in Cultural Enterprise and Entertainment Management was developed under the aegis of the Institute of Caribbean Studies and approved for delivery in the 2007/08 academic year. The degree draws on courses offered in Carimac, the departments of Management Studies, Literatures in English and the ICS.

Also, in its attempt to engage greater interest of students, the department of Literatures in English developed and offered for the first time a course in "Reggae Poetry" which saw an enrolment of 55 students at first offering in the academic year. The department also offered new courses in African Literature and Contemporary Genres: Crime and Science Fiction.

Significant developments in the department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy involved the introduction of a new diploma programme and Major in Sign Language Interpreting. A long term objective of both these programmes is to make tertiary education more accessible to hearing impaired persons. Too, the department which has responsibility for the Foundation writing courses also reviewed the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) with a view to determining its relevancy to task.

While passing the test is not a matriculation requirement, the demand and competition for places within the FHE in recent years have been such that students who are not successful in the ELPT are not likely to be offered a place in the Faculty.

Two departments, independent of each other, mounted special activities to coincide with the hosting of World Cup Cricket by the Caribbean in early 2007. Prior to the event, Carimac mounted a workshop for regional journalists on “Covering Cricket”, and the department of History and Archaeology through the Social History Project mounted a well received travelling exhibition on the “History of Cricket in Jamaica, 1870 to the Present”, at four locations within the Corporate Area including the National Library and Devon House.

To commemorate the Bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade the department of History and Archaeology was involved with several outreach activities at the national level in Jamaica, including teachers’ workshops, and to great acclaim the department also successfully hosted the 39th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians.

Graduate Studies

The throughput rate of post graduate students in the Faculty still leaves much to be desired and various efforts were made to improve the situation including workshops on conducting research, thesis writing, and preparing for the Viva. Notwithstanding, the Faculty remains concerned with the level of funding available to both full time and part time graduate students that would assist them to complete their degrees within the specified time frames. Indeed far too many graduate students

at some point during their studies request and are granted Leave of Absence for financial reasons.

It is evident that this is a systemic problem and not one that is confined to the FHE. However, the dilemma that the Faculty faces in confronting the problem is that the strategic decision that all new graduate programmes and degrees must be self-financing increases the cost of such programmes to students. How to ameliorate the financial difficulties faced by the majority of our post graduate students therefore, remains one of the Faculty's major challenges. In spite of the challenges faced by them, two of the eleven candidates who gained PhDs during the year did so with High Commendation

Other Related Matters

Close reading of individual departmental reports will reveal that, while doing more with less (which has become a virtual mantra), the FHE as a whole continues to be focused on three inter-related strategic areas: quality undergraduate and graduate teaching, research and income generation. Disciplines such as Education and Media and Communication which are in high demand are better poised to generate income while satisfying demand for their services. Precisely because the traditional Humanities disciplines are disadvantaged vis-à-vis the more saleable areas in the present market-driven environment of the University, Ms. Kelly Magnus, a marketing specialist attached to Carimac, was invited to the annual Faculty Retreat in May to discuss the need for a marketing plan for the Faculty and to assist with the development of such a plan in time for implementation in the 2007/08 academic year.

This report would be incomplete without reference to the Faculty's high achievers during the year. First among equals was Dr. Waibinte Wariboko, Deputy Dean and Coordinator of Graduate Studies who was promoted to Professor of African History.

Drs. Aleric Josephs, Curdella Forbes and Helen Henningham were all recipients of Mona Research Day Awards.

Dr. Henningham's award for attracting the most research funds, is worthy of special mention since she attracted a highly coveted Wellcome Trust research grant of over a quarter million pound sterling

(L250,000) and will spend the next two years working collaboratively with colleagues in the TMRU.

Unfortunately, the sudden passing of two esteemed colleagues during the academic year, Ms. Dorothy Scott of the department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy and Dr. Fitzroy Baptiste of the department of History and Archaeology, cast a shadow on what would otherwise have been, on balance, a quite successful year for the Faculty.

The changing of the guard in the Faculty's administration, with the retirement of Professor Aggrey Brown whose term of office as Dean had been extended for the academic year, occurred smoothly with the timely appointment of Dr. Swithin Wilmot, head of the department of History and Archaeology to succeed him. And while the Faculty would also miss its Deputy Dean for Academic Quality Control, Dr. Camille Bell Hutchinson, it was pleased to know that her quite considerable skills and competence would be brought to bear at Campus level as the new (and first) female Registrar of the Mona Campus.