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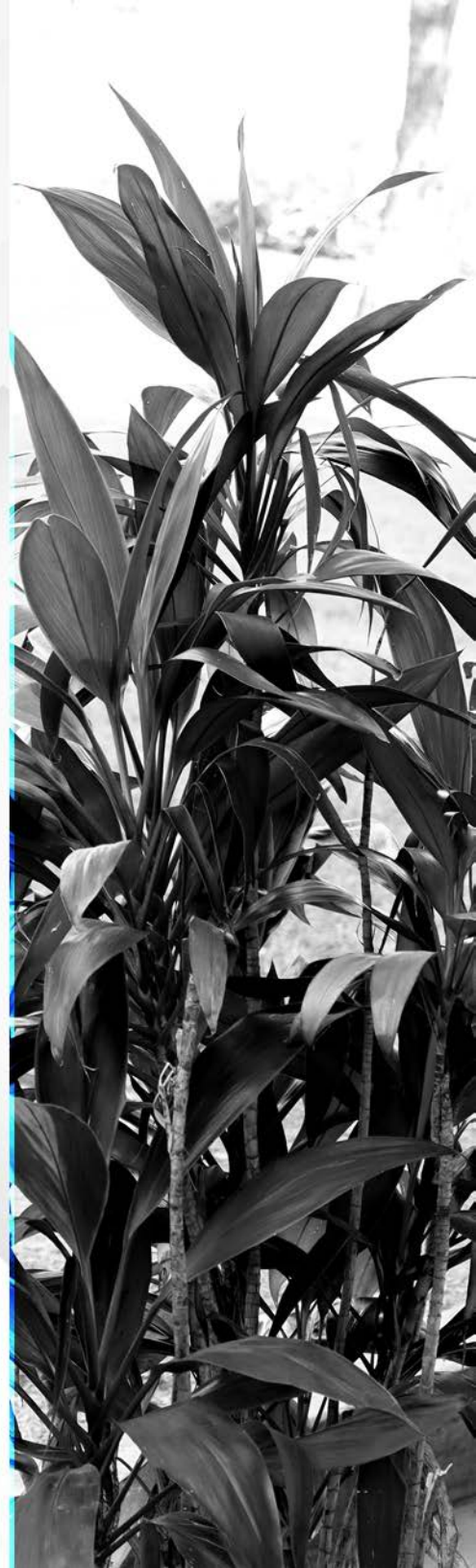
MONA

THE UWI MONA WESTERN JAMAICA CAMPUS

Year Ending July 31st, 2021



Patrick Prendergast · **Campus Director**
PhD



OVERVIEW

The UWI Mona – Western Jamaica Campus emerged from 2020-2021 proving to be bold, resilient, and responsive. Every facet of the Montego Bay located higher education enterprise was tested – students and staff, teaching and learning, the social environment, its physical and intellectual tools – by the full-blown realities of the Covid-19 pandemic. Expectations were heightened, primarily by a financial situation that required further austerity and an increased demand on a technological infrastructure that, though vastly improved during the period under review, was still not meeting the demand for stability in connectivity, efficiency and ease of managing the online learning experience, and more contemporary hardware and software support. There were also pre-existing anxieties around the need for increasing student enrollment, identifying qualified faculty and professional staffing, maintaining a world-ranked teaching and learning experience while pivoting to a still evolving online pedagogy, and advancing the objectives of the Triple 'A' Strategy – Access, Alignment, and Agility. But unprecedented times make for extraordinary climbs. The WJC administration therefore had to: take bold approaches to creating opportunities for access to higher education; demonstrate its capacity to pivot without diminishing expected standards and values of the university; and provide evidence-based practical responses to present and future needs of both the academic community and the wider society. Programme offerings were further consolidated and the teaching and learning experience more integrated within the Mona system to allow for more efficient and effective delivery of the courses in an online environment.

There was also enhanced application of information communication technology to the campus' continued leadership and engagement in many spheres of life across the health, municipal, business, and community development sectors. Three major conferences and several seminars and workshops were executed by the academic staff and students at the campus and across the city of Montego Bay. New tactics were designed and applied to meeting the desired objectives of improving professional skills and capacity – including a hybrid telecommuting work and staff training programme and the promotion of a health and wellness programme among all categories of staff. There was however, a decrease in overall student registration. This was due to a combination of lower than expected new undergraduate registration for two consecutive years and the merging of the online teaching and learning experience. 811 undergraduates registered for 17 majors while 54 students were registered in two graduate programmes offered by the MSBM bringing the overall total to 865, down from 905 in the previous year. The academic programmes continued to be delivered by a majority of adjunct staff, albeit reduced by increased use of the University's learning management system and support platforms, as well as, better engagement of our full time lecturer-coordinators both in course delivery and providing quality assured guidance and advisement within their departments.

PRIORITY SAFE

Operations within the University system continue to be severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Access to ICT and keeping the workforce healthy and safe were the two main components in assuring continuity of study and the delivery of student development, health, security, physical plant and community services without compromising quality assurance standards. The technology support within both the individual staff offices and student spaces was strengthened to allow for reliable connectivity and enhanced service, in the case of the lecturers. Student access to the on-campus technology support was promoted and more study spaces made available in the lecture and seminar rooms within the prevailing national Covid-19 protocols. All academic and requisite administrative staff were engaged in refresher courses in OURVLE and Blackboard Collaborate platforms before the beginning of teaching in each semester. The Information Technologists were also available for support to both synchronous and asynchronous online experiences for a standard daily 14-hour teaching period. This service was also opened to the students remotely and enhanced the 24-hour online support provided by the Library. All staff providing administrative services – bursary, customer relations, facilities management, student matters, research and communication – were trained in the Kayako ticketing system. This was aimed at improving both our responsiveness to student issues online and remote as well as the work-from-home arrangements and assignments.

Four persons – Inderia Adjudah, Vecas Grant, Carla Edwards and Carl Francis – were trained as Covid 19 monitors to oversee the proper acceptance of COVID 19 protocols at the WJC. Plexi-glass separators were installed in the public access spaces in the main reception and bursary offices, lobby/security area to the academic building, and the WJC Library to reduce staff and stakeholder exposure to possible COVID 19 transmission. The leadership of the campus also engaged in and continued its audience targeted WJC Covid-19 Advisories both in the direct communication and enhanced social media spaces. The narrative in the messages was consistent about staying safe, healthy and sane. A highlight of the WJC Connect series started in the 2020-2021 academic year is the World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2021 Webinar, Finding Balance: Managing our Life Stories, Health and Safety.

STUDENT REGISTRATION, ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The official registration at July 31, 2021 stood at 865 down from 905 registered at July 31, 2020. The Faculty of Science & Technology saw a slight increase in its new student registration (24) having made a change to the matriculation requirements and an introduction of a level zero preliminary year for its Information Technology programme. The numbers for FHE also declined as CARIMAC continued its reduction of student offers made to the WJC in both the Integrated Marketing and Communication and the Digital Media

Programme. The latter is no longer a unique programme to the WJC. While the number of students attached to the Faculty of the Medical Sciences decreased with the phased suspension of the MBBS programme completed, UWISON remains a full four-year offering with registration remaining even. The decrease seen in the Faculty of Social Sciences was essentially due to continued enforcement of quota restrictions and grandfathering of programmes within MSBM, as well as falling numbers in Government and to a lesser extent, Psychology. However, the WJC continues to see improvement in the retention rate of returning students. Both the academic staff as well as the administrative, technical and support staff were engaged in increased training and professional development activities, specifically in relation to Triple A strategy AG 4 – To foster a Creative, Caring, Accountable, Motivated and Professional staff (CAMP). These staff engagement and enhancement activities were done either through external institutions and individuals or from within the university's human resource development programmes. A special dialogue on best practices in online pedagogy with particular focus on the administration of online assessments was done in collaboration with colleagues at the Old Dominion University. The session was led by Dr. Mark Reh fuss who was responsible for the design and transitioning of the Human Services to online education and Dr. Narketta Sparkman Key, our longstanding lead partner in the human services study-abroad programme managed in Jamaica by the WJC. Participants were drawn from UWISON across the Mona system and MSBM.

The tradition of designing and delivering high quality public engagement between our academics and professionals from across multiple disciplines and areas of practice was successfully met, even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the campus was both bold and agile in its public discourse, hosting three major academic and professional conferences in Montego Bay over a two month period. All three were scaled-up from one-day symposiums to three-day hybrid conferences with sessions, activities, presenters and delegates located across Europe, USA and the Caribbean. Significantly all were delivered on fully integrated media production and streaming platform managed entirely by MITS staff and fully funded by partners including IDB, PAHO, DBJ, NHT, and the Ministry of Health, among others. First up was the Mental Health Conference 2020 from October 6 – 11 which is one of two annual conferences hosted by the WJC Psychology Unit under the leadership of Miss Georgia Rose in collaboration with agencies and departments within the Western Regional Health Authority, the Ministry of Health, and multilateral agencies. This conference was repurposed as a virtual event and expanded to six main sessions over six days. Among the main speakers and presenters were Jamaica's Minister of Health and Wellness Hon Dr. Christopher Tufton, President of the Jamaica Psychiatric Association, Dr. Earl Wright, and former Director of Mental Health and Substance abuse at WHO, Professor Benedetto Saraceno. An average of 200 persons participated over the six days of the live online presentations and subsequently an average 1100 views on YouTube. The second conference hosted by the WJC Psychology Unit was the Parenting Conference 2020 from November 24 – 26. Among the main speakers and presenters were Dr. Abigail Harrison, Lecturer and Consultant Pediatrician at UWI Mona, and Dr. Alfred Dawes, Gen-

eral, Laparoscopic and Weight Loss Surgeon who presented on the topics Parenting in a Global Pandemic and Securing a Place for the Jamaican Father during a Global Pandemic, respectively. On average 200 participants engaged in the 3 day live online sessions and on average 1800 views on YouTube.

The WJC Caribbean Sustainable Cities Conference 2020 was staged from November 4 – 6, 2020 at the Hilton Rose Hall Resort under strict COVID 19 protocols as a full hybrid event fully funded by our partners at IDB, DBJ, NHT, and Habitat for Humanity, among others. The three-day affair was dubbed Go Green Go Safe Go Smart (GS2.2020) and was opened to planners, environmentalists, academics, researchers, policymakers, students, and all parties interested in realizing peaceful, inclusive, and environmentally and technologically sustainable cities, especially in Small Island Developing States like the Caribbean. Among the main speakers featured at the GS2.2020 Conference were His Excellency Asif Ahmad former British High Commissioner to Jamaica, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Homer Davis, also a former Mayor of Montego Bay and Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of the Mona Campus, Professor Dale Webber. There were about 150 registrations for the closed in-person and virtual plenaries and panel presentations along with another 300 participants for the open public lectures and forums. Among the main presenters were Professor Michael Taylor, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, UWI Mona, Dr. Garfield Young, Associate Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment, UTech, Jamaica, and Mrs. Therese Turner-Jones, General Manager, Caribbean Country Department, IDB. Mr Anthony Drummonds, Instructor and Miss Sandra Stubbs, Librarian served as members of the Conference Planning Team with responsibility for the Technological Transformation track, and Publications, respectively. As part of expanding its community engagement, the UW Mona WJC also consolidated its collaboration with the Mona Social Services (MSS). At the start of the academic year, the UWI Township Scholarship was extended to include students from the community of Glendevon, St James and Mr. Anthony Drummonds, Instructor in the Department of Computing at WJC closed the year with a basic coding and games development workshop for 10 – 15 year olds at the Mona campus from July 12-16, 2021.

DEPARTMENTAL PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Special Lectures and Conference Presentations

Henry, Jevon and Jevon Minto. "BRI in the Caribbean: Collapse, Chaos, & Disruption." 21st Annual SALISES Conference, Trinidad and Tobago (Virtual), December 10-13, 2020.

Henry, J. Hester, M. & Barrett, G. "Enhancing Classroom Learning through Debate: A Jamaican Perspective." 24th Conference on the Americas, University of North Georgia (Virtual), February 19-20, 2021.

Prendergast, Patrick "Powering Development: Community Radio Translating Voice into Action." The 11th CARIMAC Aggrey Brown Distinguished Lecture, CARIMC, April 14, 2021

Rose, Georgia "The Socio-psychological Culture of Crime in Western Jamaica", WJC Caribbean Sustainable Cities Conference 2020 Public Lecture, Hilton Rose Hall, November 6, 2020.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Anderson, Ricardo Exploring Strategies for Assuring the Integrity of Remote Online Assessments", The UWI Quality Education Forum, 25, 78-95, OBUS UWI, 2021. Available: <https://journals.sta.uwi.edu/qef/index.asp?action=viewArticle&issueId=818&articleId=8130&galleyId=6923>

Additionally, Mr. Anthony Drummonds served as Peer Reviewer for the IEEE SoutheastCon 2021, Jan-Feb 2021 and Dr. Ricardo Anderson served as reviewer for the European Journal of Information Systems, May 2021, while Mr Jevon Henry served as Guest Reviewer for the International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (AY 2020-21)

Seminar Presentations

Drummonds, Anthony Cyber Security Safe Practices, World Health and Safety Day Seminar, The UWI Mona WJC, April 28, 2021.

Alumni Achievements:

Two WJC graduates joined the MSc Economics 2020/21 cohort at UWI, Mona. They are Miss Brooke-Anne Bowen and Miss Randalee Reid. Miss Bowen was awarded the department's highly competitive G Arthur Brown Scholarship.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the campus to pivot in some instances but in other areas, has quickened the decisions around governance, reorganization, and reimagining the strategic direction of the campus within the Mona and wider UWI system. As part of the ongoing response to governance issues, academic and operational restructuring, and financial sustainability, a special unit was established within the Office of the Campus Director to essentially drive an evidence-based research and communication strategy and support plan for the campus. This Creative, Research and Information Technology Unit (CRIT) pulls on already established knowledge and technical skills within the WJC and will support the strategic planning, project development, and communication activities – including marketing and promotion – of the campus as it prepares for the final year of the 2017 – 2022 Triple A Strategic Plan and transition to the 2022-2027 Revenue Revolution Plus. The June 2021 WJC Planning Retreat which was convened to plan and review specific outcomes and related initiatives for the 2017-2022 strategic period, identified the following focal areas going forward: Completing the implementation of the WJC Governance Audit Report;

Restoring financial health;

Expanding the local and international partnerships with corporate and academic institutions to support the realization of new academic and scholastic programming;

Investing in the development of the physical plant and technological infrastructure; and

Engaging in strategic communication and information connectivity, technological capacity-building, and research and evidence-based responsiveness; to market imperatives and aspirations for higher education.

