

THE UWI MONA WESTERN JAMAICA CAMPUS Montego Bay, Jamaica

Year ending July 31, 2023



**PATRICK PRENDERGAST, PHD
CAMPUS DIRECTOR**

Overview

The University of the West Indies, Mona – Western Jamaica Campus (WJC) completed its 15th year of operations in the city of Montego Bay with heightened expectancy and an ambivalent sense of hope. This was primarily due to the negative impact of the austere financial realities coupled with increased demand on a physical plant that still requires constant repurposing. During the latter half of the year, in particular, the financial and infrastructural challenges further provoked pre-existing anxieties about the consequences of falling new student registrations, gaps in recruiting and retaining qualified faculty, and returning to face-to-face teaching with inadequate capacity to sustain the campus' success agenda.

For the period under review the new students registration fell to the lowest since the establishment of the campus in 2008 (118 v. 179); but the returning students rate was still high enough to keep the overall campus enrollment at just about two-thirds of its pre-Covid total (613 v. 904). There were also continued streamlining of the academic offerings, including termination of two programmes and suspension of several courses, and a stubborn reluctance to strategically reduce the campus' over dependence on adjunct engagement. Nevertheless, the WJC managed to ride with the tides delivering notable successes in several undertakings aimed at maintaining its vision as a center of excellence in higher education for Western Jamaica and the global marketplace.

The academic year 2022/23 also saw increased faculty engagement in academic and industry conferences, lectures, seminars and publications as well as between the academy and the community. Among the events on which the campus had lead responsibility were the Western Regional Mental Health Conference Virtual Edition 2.0 (October 12–13), the 2nd biennial Caribbean Sustainable Cities Conference – GS2.2022 (November 16–18); and the first Jamaica Youth Tourism Summit – Future-Proofing Tourism For Us delivered as a course project in the tourism management programme (December 1). All of which not only demonstrated our alignment with the industry and community but also kept critical audience eyes, ears, and minds on the campus.

Beyond that, the UWI Mona WJC's reputation for higher level leadership and involvement across multiple spheres of life in the western region – health and wellness, education, municipal governance, sustainable cities and communities,

commerce and industry, and community enterprise – remain strong success points upon which the next 15 years must be expanded and celebrated. The campus must, as a matter of priority, embrace and plan for the many opportunities that will significantly increase both local and international student enrollment, introduce the new programmatic initiatives being developed over the last few years, convert the strong local and international business and educational partnerships into active development of the physical plant, enhance faculty and staff professional experience, engage our growing impact-making alumni, and advance the culture of student success upon which it has been steadily building since its establishment in the city of Montego Bay. Strong universities make for stronger communities.

THE WJC BOLD, RESPONSIVE AND RESILIENT IN 22/23

The following sections highlight the story of the WJC in relation to specific areas of the UWI's Triple-A Strategy. A special note is that the 2022/23 academic year would have been both the 15th year of WJC's operation in the city of Montego Bay and the start of the new 2022–2027 strategic period for the University.

ACCESS – ENHANCING QUALITY, PROMOTING SUCCESS

The full resumption of teaching in the landed space also required greater effort at developing and promoting initiatives aimed at introducing and reconnecting students both to each other and to programmes designed to support individual growth and development – especially in student services. From as early as Orientation 2022 both faculty and staff were proactively engaged as academic advisors and in promoting the value of academic advisement to a quality student experience for all. Three more members of faculty enrolled in MPhil/PhD programmes – two in nursing and one in management. Two of our nursing educators were also trained in the EU/Ministry of National Security sponsored Psychological First Aid (PFA) and one graduated as a Critical Care Nurse.

The campus also participated at various levels in a number of local fundraising initiatives – especially those aimed at providing financial support to students. For example, the Montego Bay City Run returned with tremendous success in May 2023. This Run was established to specifically help tertiary students fund their education, and we were happy to maintain our longstanding service on the Committee responsible for staging the event. Additionally, the return of the WJC Honor Student Society Awards – which was designed to recognize and celebrate academic excellence for just that, and the UWISON students gaining one hundred percent passes in the Regional Examination for Nurse Registration (**REN**R) (both in October) served as important indicators of the achievements made in the promotion of a culture of student success at the WJC.

The marketing and promotion of the UWI Mona WJC as an innovative, diverse, and student-centred University space within which aspirants could “Find Your Bold” was further expanded to include active participation in community-based social and cultural events hosted by both public and private organizations across the entire Western half of Jamaica. There were also special advertising and public relations activities in local, mainstream and social media spaces. Of particular note was the introduction of a Community Media and Open Information Day by the CARIMAC students. This featured a Caribbean community media symposium, a public lecture, and outside broadcasts with two radio stations all of which brought significant presence, attention, and interest to the WJC.

The general thrust was to position the WJC as an agile and responsive community-focused place for successfully realizing personal and professional goals. So while there was an increased presence of the third and fourth year nursing students at several community outreach and health & wellness activities across the region, the UWISON was also conducting interviews and making offers earlier than traditionally obtained in direct response to the market concerns about late notice of admissions.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Obika, A.** (2023). “Toward a Governance Model for the Caribbean Film Industry: An Exploration of the Jamaican Film Industry.” *The Journal of Communication and Media Studies* 8(2): 1–9. doi:10.18848/2470-9247/CGP/v08i02/1-9.

ALIGNMENT

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS. STRENGTHENING SOCIETY

Some new and ongoing initiatives that kept the flag of the academy flying at respectable levels emerged from advancing the dialogue with industry players and international partner universities and colleges regarding the design of specialized undergraduate degrees and certification programmes. Interest remains strong in engineering, culture and entertainment management, media design and production, human resource development, and mental health leadership. The signing of the corporation agreement with CHEC (January 31) to construct a civil engineering lab at our Irwin property, the UWI Global Health Institute and Partners Meeting held in Kingston (March 10) and the Tourism Educators Forum in Montego Bay (April 21), as well as the participation of James Madison University in our International Study Visit Programme (July 8–31) are signals of great potential for the future.

There was also the MSS UWI 75 Community Lecture in the Glendevon Community (February 21) which was delivered by Assistant Lecturer in Accounting, Miss Nickiesha Gray. Dr Odetha Davis, Adjunct lecturer in tourism and management was panelist on the Women in Hospitality Forum (Virtual) organized by WJC in conjunction with Sandals Corporate University and Castell College, the Foundation arm of the American Hotel and Lodging Association (March 30, 2023); and the Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training which was adapted and delivered by our campus psychotherapist, Dr Jenifer Stuart-Dixon in association with the EU Technical Assistance Team Citizen Security Secretariat of the Ministry of National Security.

Papers Presented

- **Henry, Jevon and Anthony Drummonds.** “The impact of Phishing on Smart City Development: Can Behavioural Economics Provide an Explanation?” presented at the Caribbean Sustainable Cities Conference hosted by UWI Mona WJC, November 16–18, 2022.
- **Henry-Ferguson, V.** “The Lived Experiences of Pregnant Teenagers during the Pandemic”, 33rd Nursing and Midwifery Conference, The UWI School of Nursing, Mona, May 25–26, 2023.
- **Obika, A.** “Notting Hill Carnival: Impact of the Windrush Generation”, Windrush 75 International Conference: Reforming our Futures, London, United Kingdom. June 23–24, 2023.
- **Obika, A.** and Yvette Rowe. “The Carnival in Jamaica Project Update.” Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research (BCMCR) Research Seminar, February 8, 2023 (Online).
- **Obika, A.** “Exploring the Use of Digital Technology in Trinidad’s Virtual Carnival 2021 and Beyond” CARIMAC Research Seminar, The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, September 21, 2022 (Online).
- **Prendergast, P. W.** “Freedom of the press in Jamaica”. The Inaugural J.A. Lester Spaulding Distinguished Lecture, RJR-Gleaner Communications Broadcast House, May 3, 2023.
- **Prendergast, P. W.** “Let’s connect – Schools, towns and cities: Isolation, anti-social behaviors and the dilemma of building communicative public spaces”, Public Lecture, 2nd Biennial Caribbean Sustainable Cities Conference, Hilton Rose Hall, Montego Bay, Jamaica, November 17, 2022.
- **Prendergast, P. W.** “Conform or transform – Surviving the class of COVID-19”, Western Regional Health Authority Mental Health Conference, October 12, 2022 (Virtual)

PUBLIC SERVICE

- Nurse Educator, Veronica Waugh-Brown served as a Mentor in the Ministry of Justice Child Diversion programme. She also served as member of the Child Protection Committee at the Cornwall Regional Hospital along with UWISON-WJC colleague, Dacia Neita-Chambers. UWISON-WJC Coordinator, Verona Henry-Ferguson served as Chairperson of the Nurse Educators' Special Interest Group – Nurses Association of Jamaica, and Facilitator of the Continuing Education for Nurses, In-service Education Department at Cornwall Regional Hospital.
- From November 2022 to February 2023, Dr. Alpha Obika served as an Expert Interviewer for the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus' Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies. The 4-month long process involved screening, shortlisting and interviewing prospecting candidates for 2 available positions. He also served from January to March 2023 as the Jamaica Country Expert for the Digital Society Project's "Measuring Internet Politics." An extensive survey of Jamaica's communication and telecommunication policy landscape was completed.

AGILITY

SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Especially in the context of a tighter than expected hold on the purse strings and the continued squeeze on capital projects, extra effort was expended to ensure that all the new and recurring initiatives such as conferences, special seminars, and course projects were fully self-financed, either through participant registration or grants and sponsorship from local and international corporate organizations and development institutions. The three initiatives mentioned here – GS2.2022 Conference (USD110K), the International Student Study Programme (USD20K) and Summer School 2023 (USD17K) – would have returned in 22/23 because of either scheduling design or suspension of the programme for over a three to five year period, but proved to be strong indicators of potential in capacity building.

Faculty and staff were also engaged in new professional development initiatives through the Staff Engagement and Enhancement/Workforce Development Committee. These included an Inclusivity Training Workshop (August 2022) delivered by the UWI Centre for Disabilities Studies on how to relate to students and employees with disabilities, hosting the first Family Health and Wellness Day which covered all areas of health and wellness (October 2022), and a University of Florida Counselling and Wellness Center workshop (June 2023). The Chair of the SEE/WDC

also worked with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research to design and administer a Staff Engagement Survey that would allow for cleaner disaggregation and better understanding of the special organizational culture at the WJC.

CONCLUSION

The UWI Mona WJC is 15. Many objectives are yet to be met. Some may have to be abandoned, some adjusted, but there is a future for UWI Mona in the West. WJC's value to the technological transformation agenda of the campus must be capitalized. Its social and economic value to the city and the region needs deeper dive. The resilience with which it has come through these first fifteen years is part of the spirit and culture of the city and people it serves – a spirit and culture that have so much more to offer a University for teaching, research, and community enterprise and to which a University like ours has much more to return.

For the 2023/2024 academic year, the projection is to increase and sustain the marketing, advertising and promotion of the WJC's boldness, innovation, diversity, and resilience as a University center of excellence in higher education and sustainable development. This will include leveraging the local and international partnerships built over the last 15 years to improve its capacity to meet the physical and technological infrastructure needs of the campus.

We will also seek to expand the effort at building a culture of student success in an environment of quality assurance and global standards of pedagogies, as well as recruit and maintain faculty that will drive both the research and development agenda of the campus and the design and delivery of academic programmes and experiences that draw on the unique historical, sociological, cultural, and economic dynamism of the region and the city of Montego Bay.

Finally, we will seek to increase local and international student enrollment in the identified growth areas in both undergraduate, graduate, and certification and professional development programmes.