



THE UWI MONA **WESTERN JAMAICA** **CAMPUS**

Year Ending July 31st, 2022

Campus Director



Dr. Patrick Prendergast

PhD

OVERVIEW

The academic year 2021-2022 will be remembered as a very challenging one for the UWI Mona WJC – possibly the most defining since its establishment in the city of Montego Bay in 2008. But, unprecedented times make for extraordinary climbs. The tag line – Find Your Bold – took on a different meaning as staff, students and the entire WJC community found dynamic ways to both dance through the rain and strengthen its collective spirit of overcoming the storm.

The bold, resilient and responsive initiatives undertaken during the 2021-2022 academic year highlighted the need for financial security, ensuring quality staffing, consistency in defending the quality assurance processes, and enhancing the teaching and learning experience for our students. These became major priorities over the year in review while balancing the heightened anxieties that come with an austere financial climate, greater demand on the technological infrastructure, and planning for the resumption of face-to-face teaching. All this within the context of a significant consolidation of the physical plant for both teaching and student accommodation and the ‘convenience of study’ on the emerging and evolving online platforms.

Operational successes for the 2021-2022 period include significant improvement in the ICT infrastructure, further rationalization of academic programmes – including hard decisions to curtail unprofitable programmes – and, increased staff engagement and professional development initiatives. We also strengthened the work on designing new industry responsive and future-casting academic programmes and expanded the engagement with our local and international partners in both the higher education and corporate sectors. The UWI Mona WJC’s reputation of higher level leadership and involvement in and across multiple spheres of life in the western region – health and wellness, education, municipal, commerce and industry, and community enterprise – remained strong success points upon which the 15th year must be expanded and celebrated.

However, consistent with the post-Covid-19 predictions and the realities across the tertiary education space, the UWI Mona WJC ended the aca-

demical year 2021/22 with a 12.3% decrease in student registration due largely to a sharp decline in the number of new registrations in undergraduate programmes. The projections are for the downward slip in new student registration to continue into the new academic year. The major thrust must therefore be towards significantly increasing student enrollment, introducing the new programmatic initiatives being developed over the last few years, converting the stronger local and international business and educational partnerships into active development of the physical plant, enhancing staff professional experience, and advancing the consistent student success agenda.

STUDENT REGISTRATION AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

The official student registration at July 31, 2022 stood at 758 compared to 865 at the end of academic year 2020/21. This represents a year to date decrease of approximately 12.3 percent and an overall decrease of just under 20 percent over the Covid-19 period. There were 722 registered undergraduate students in 17 majors and 36 registered graduate students in two programmes. While the student registration in the Faculty of Social Sciences fell by 20% the FSS continues to carry the majority of the students at WJC. Most of these students are in programmes offered by the Mona School of Business and Management and the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work.

All students in the Faculty of Medical Sciences are pursuing the BSc in Nursing. This year 46 nursing students were indexed – 15 more than would normally be indexed – given the continued delivery of classes via remote and online modalities. Of course the clinical rotations and the practical skills lab continued unabated through the period.

Both the academic staff as well as the administrative, technical and support staff were engaged in increased training and professional development activities to ensure improved student relations and customer experience for all stakeholders. Primary effort was placed on a structured and systematic review of the pedagogical experiences among both academic staff and students. Some faculty were involved in doing research on such experience – particularly as it related to attitudes towards the potential return to f2f engagement – and a number of special workshops pertaining to the design and delivery of both remote and emergency teaching were done with local and international personnel in higher education.

One of the initiatives introduced during this period was a regular mental health day for members of the administrative staff but all categories of staff participated in training and exposure provided by external resources or internally through the HRMD, Office of Emergency Management, and Estate Management Department as well as the Mona led Enterprise Risk Assessment project.

Consolidating all the UWI Mona WJC operations at the Chatwick property would have also meant significantly reduced access to teaching spaces and increased demand on office spaces. This led to a more deliberate and strategic focus on effective and efficient scheduling and reassignment of the available spaces. There was also the introduction of a customer service campaign dubbed "Above and Beyond" as part of ensuring that the supporting systems for quality teaching and learning, efficient student administration and registration, and effective dissemination of information were monitored and that the requisite protocols and processes were implemented and consistently evaluated.

In November 2021 Dr. Mikeann Channer was celebrated as one of the valedictorians for the 2021 graduation ceremonies. She is a former medical student from Montego Bay who started her educational journey at the WJC. 146 students who completed their study at the UWI Mona WJC received undergraduate degrees, including 18 first class honors, and 16 graduate degrees at the 2021 graduation exercises. It should also be noted that despite the downtrend in student registration, some academic programmes are still experiencing growth in their numbers consistent with the expressed interests from the schools and community promotional activities undertaken during the period under review.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Psychology Unit, a standard bearer in developing and delivering world class public discourse at WJC did not let up on their engagement during the period. For example, in October we sustained the annual Mental Health Conference on a fully virtual platform. This was held under the theme "Mental Health in a Changing World: The Have and Have not's- How did we get here?" alongside our partners at the Western Regional Health Authority. In November our annual parenting series was fully endorsed and produced as a virtual experience through a new unsolicited partnership with the VM Group.

In September 2021 the WJC Advisory Board was formally convened with both Principal, Professor Dale Webber and Deputy Principal, Prof Ian Boxill addressing the group. The advisory board comprises various stakeholder grouping and industries from across the western region and will provide critical guidance and support to the success path of the campus. The membership represents the educational sector, the clergy, the global services sector, business and tourism, the legal fraternity, and alumni of the campus.

The Communication Research and Information Technology Unit in the Office of the Campus Director designed and executed several campaigns for social media platforms and community-based initiatives as part of the marketing and promotion of the UWI Mona WJC. This was in addition to the usual school visits and recruitment activities supported by MaRCom and was intended to broaden our presence and reach beyond the traditional parishes of Western Jamaica.

The highly successful WJC Connect – The Online Edition which started with the Orientation Activation sessions in September 2021 was reactivated in January 2022 as a check-in with current students. Dubbed, “What’s Your Topic”, the information and awareness building session engaged students and faculty around critical issues and concerns emanating from the remote/online teaching experience as identified by the students in a direct phone survey conducted prior to the session. That too was successful and between both sessions the students were connected with the Principal, Campus Director, members of faculty, student services and development and the WJC Advisory Board.

In February 2022, the UCJ review team met with students, staff and lecturers to assess the overall operations of the Western Jamaica Campus and in March, the CRIT unit participated in the Mona-led UWI for You: Metaverse of Education Virtual Expo where the Campus Director was a part of the real time panel discussion.

DEPARTMENTAL PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Conference Presentation:

Drummonds, A., Henry, J., & Mirpuri, K.. An Analysis of Website Phishing Awareness in Jamaica. IEEE Southeast Conference. March 26-27, 2022. (Presented by A. Drummonds)

Conference Proceedings:

Drummonds, A. O., Henry, J., & Mirpuri, K. (2022). An Analysis of Website Phishing Awareness in Jamaica. *IEEE Southeast Conference 2022*, pp. 368-373. doi: 10.1109/SoutheastCon48659.2022.9764050

Conference Panel Chair:

Jevon Henry (Panel Chair) - Health and Labour II. West Indies Economic Conference (WECON). March 10-11, 2022.

CONCLUSION

Much has been done over the 2021-2022 academic year but there is more ground to be covered as we get the campus to an overall path of sustainability. The maintenance of Mona's brand excellence and preservation of its academic and financial integrity are paramount. While these are critical areas of priority we must build out a communication strategy and support plan that allows the campus to:

- leverage its existing business and educational partnerships to include the international universities;
- introduce new programmatic initiatives aligned with the excellent reputation of success in niche areas such as behavioral sciences, human services, nursing, accounting, hospitality and tourism, media and communication, cultural enterprise management, and management studies;
- increase student enrollment and advance the culture of student success across the entire University experience;
- attract new local and international partners for the development of the physical plant, technological infrastructure, and staff professionalism.

The UWI Mona WJC did, indeed, affirm that unprecedented times make for extraordinary climbs in 2021-2022.