

8. Charting The Way Forward

The UWI, Mona is committed to engaging the strategic imperatives of the newly developed 2007–2012 Plan. In the reporting year, the Campus canvassed all its stakeholders – students, staff, unions, community, employers, government, the media – to more clearly understand their perceptions and expectations of the academy with a view to building on its strengths and addressing weaknesses. The areas identified as critical to the successful repositioning of the University to compete effectively in the national, regional and global market are Teaching and Learning, Graduate Studies, Research and Innovation and Responsiveness to those contributing countries that do not have a UWI Campus – the UWI 12.

In charting a way forward, the Campus is mindful of the significant resource constraints but has sought to identify its priorities within the four elements of the “Core Strategic Focus” and with respect to the three “Major Enablers” and three “Other Strategic Areas of Importance”. Major activities to encourage this process have begun, highlighting the commitment of the Campus to a process that promotes staff’s understanding of the basic elements of the Plan, as well as the role they need to play in achieving the Plan’s objectives.

The Campus’s primary goal is to improve the way in which students (undergraduate and postgraduate, face to face and distance) experience UWI: in terms of their study programmes, the administrative processes and the general conditions that they face.

The strengthening of the leadership, management and administrative structures on the Campus and at the Faculty levels is a first step towards engaging these focal areas. The ICT requirements must also be seen as a priority to be addressed. In this regard, the Campus is committed to significantly increasing its broad band access and to provide facilities to ensure better data security and a more appropriate environment for the millions of dollars invested in IT equipment for the storage of the campus systems and computer files. To this end, work on the extension to the building housing the Mona Information Technology Services (MITS) department began in the current academic year.

In operationalising the Strategic Plan 2007–2012, two areas of significance to the remit of the Deputy Principal’s Office, Quality Assurance and Student Centredness, will need even greater attention and action. This will require enhanced data



research and analysis, as well as further initiatives for student holistic learning, regional and international exposure, and improved physical facilities, including for graduate students. There is no shortage of potential ideas and projects for these objectives, but the challenge is to find innovative ways of funding them, including more aggressive tapping of agencies and sponsors.

The Campus is committed to increasing the funds to be made available to upcoming academics who are pursuing an accelerated research track, to increasing efforts to attract external donor funds for research projects and to expand the involvement of graduate students in research.

During 2006–2007, the Faculty of Social Sciences brought its staff together in a number of working groups to focus on implementing strategies to address the Campus’s new strategic objectives. The Faculty determined that it would:

1. Address the pressing issues relating to the upkeep of facilities, the renewal of equipment and the provision of new facilities to house the activities of the Faculty
2. Work towards changing students’ perception of its services offered in administrative offices, ensuring that on a five-point scale of satisfaction, all departments score above 3.5 at the end of year 1 of the Strategic Plan period and above 4.0 by the end of year 2
3. Reform curricula to ensure that students are challenged with respect to developing mastery of their discipline, maintain high standards of professionalism and leave the UWI with “work ready” skills
4. Enhance the quality of teaching and learning through various means including additional training for staff as well as the greater use of new technologies and the promotion of the scholarship of teaching
5. Provide support for research in the form of grant seeking, training, team formation and greater sharing of experiences with the Faculty and across the University
6. Enhance the leadership of the Faculty by appointing a number of Associate Deans, providing greater staff support for those who exercise leadership and stimulating more staff to take on leadership roles
7. Transform the administrative culture, processes and procedure to gain maximum output in part through the applications of ICT
8. Work with HR to address outstanding issues that continue to create staff dissatisfaction including recruitment, appointment, assessment/appraisal, reclassifications evaluation and promotion procedures
9. Reposition the Faculty by ensuring that it has a full range of feedback mechanisms and that it responds to the concerns of students, staff, employers and the larger community
10. Make appropriate connections across all UWI Campuses, as well as nationally, regionally and internationally that will enhance the Faculty’s ability to achieve its stated plan of work.

The Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS), in addressing the need to accommodate an increased intake of medical, nursing and other health care students has confronted frontally the requirement to upgrade and expand its physical plant as well as to increase the number of academic staff, to ensure that



small group teaching continues. It sought and received permission from the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Mona Campus to create new posts with funds from the Faculty's highly successful income generation projects. The Faculty must now put in place the mechanisms to ensure that its self-financing projects are properly funded and managed so as to provide the resources to create additional posts. The establishment of UWI Western Jamaica will enhance and facilitate the FMS's activities in Montego Bay. An associate dean to coordinate the Faculty's activities in Western Jamaica was appointed during the year.

For Faculties to actively pursue the business of transformation, they will require the support of a strengthened and improved central administrative machinery, including:

1. Improved customer service in key departments on campus. Re-training of the staff who interface with students and other important stakeholders will be integral to this aspect of service delivery
2. A review of bursarial functions so as to enhance efficiency and ensure that faculties are provided with resources and information needed for effective delivery of their programmes to our customers
3. Reduced bureaucracy in registrarial functions relating to student admissions and registration. This will require examination of the complex technological processes that serve only to increase inefficiency
4. Improved communication between the Campus management and the Faculties to ensure appropriate implementation and administration of the Faculties' academic programmes and projects.

Primary among the concerns of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences about achieving the strategic goal of student transformation is the need to address the reading /writing/ communication skills of its students; the level of preparedness of incoming students for Mathematics at the university level; and the chronic problem of the lateness of offers of admissions to new students, giving little time for preparing them financially, academically or psychologically for entry into university.

At the graduate level work is underway in the Faculty of Social Sciences to review the graduate student profile. Building on the work already done by SALISES, a set of survey instruments was designed to identify the profile of the graduate student in Economics. It is hoped that this process will subsequently be replicated for all departments. Understanding who enters the programmes, how they perform, how they feel about their experience, their lecturers' views of them and the feedback from employers is essential to maintaining the quality of the Campus's graduate programmes.

Achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan, the development of which had the input of the entire Campus, will depend on the commitment of our dedicated staff and dynamic Campus leadership. That so much was achieved during academic year 2006-2007 augurs well for the task ahead.