

## 4. Meeting Student Needs

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Despite severe financial constraints, the Campus continued to develop and implement IT and physical infrastructural projects that are in keeping with the agreed priorities for strengthening its physical plant to enhance teaching and learning.

### ICT Enhancements

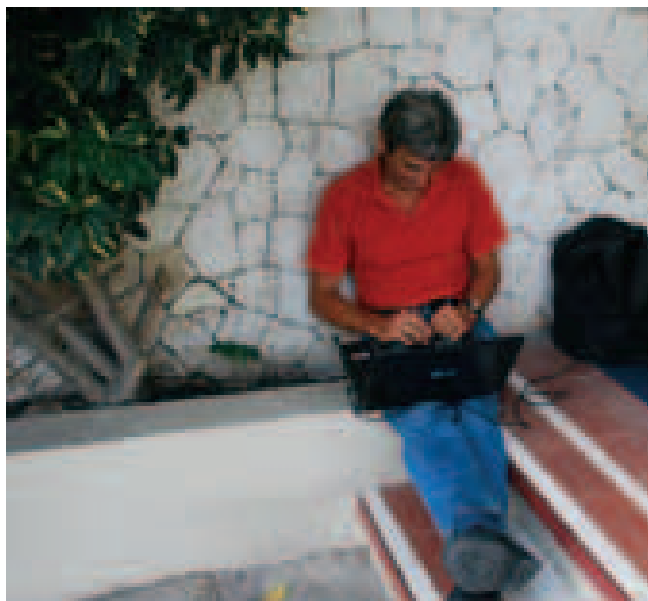
The Mona Information Technology Services (MITS) expanded the campus network infrastructure, installing or upgrading 10 Local Area Networks (LANS) in the new administrative annexe, the Community Health and Psychiatry Complex, the Hopwood Centre, the Office of Special Student Services, the Medical Students' Lounge, thereby providing students with a technology enriched environment. Thirty (30) wireless hotspots were established, achieving more widespread use, or infusion of ICT in enhancing teaching and learning effectiveness and facilitating "anytime, anywhere" access. MITS also procured and deployed an additional 300 computers, expanding student access to campus information systems and electronic courseware.

All classrooms in the Faculty of Social Sciences are now equipped with multimedia projectors. The Faculty obtained

resources to re-equip one computer lab which is to be brought into operation on a twenty-four hour basis, primarily to meet the needs of postgraduate students. A programme for the provision of additional electrical outlets indoor and outdoor was designed to promote the use of laptops by students who would be in a position to take advantage of the growing number of wireless hotspots on the Campus.

Increased wireless access in the library system made it possible for students owning laptops to access the internet inside the Library and from adjacent areas outside. Additionally, 40 laptops were acquired for the launch of the Library's laptop loan service for students.

Installation of a new integrated system (ALEPH) made it possible for students to more easily access materials and resources through the Library's Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). This enhanced system offered a wider range of service options than previously existed. Students can now access their individual loan records to see which books they have on loan. They can also reserve books online, save their searches and send results to their emails. OPAC made accessing library catalogues in the St Augustine and Cave Hill Campuses less onerous.



Among the heavily used databases acquired during the reporting year were:

- HINARI which provides, through WHO, low cost online access to the major journals in biomedical and related social sciences to local, not-for-profit institutions in developing countries
- Project Muse – a unique collaboration between libraries and publishers providing 100% full-text, affordable and user-friendly online access to over 300 high quality humanities, arts, and social sciences journals from 60 scholarly publishers, and
- Faculty of 1000 Biology – an online research tool that highlights the most interesting papers in Biology, based on the recommendations of over 1000 leading scientists.

### Physical Facilities

The Campus invested substantially in improving the physical infrastructure to enhance teaching and learning. Construction and renovation activities were undertaken in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, the MITS building, the annexe to the Senate Building, TMRI, the Basic Medical Sciences Complex, the UWI School of Nursing, Micro-Biology and Pathology, Anatomy, Sports facilities and in the Faculty of Humanities and Education.

During the year, the Lions Club of Mona officially handed over to the Campus a building with state-of-the-art facilities for students with special needs. The facility, constructed with appropriate access and the utilitarian needs of students with

disabilities in mind, is equipped with computers and boasts six sound proof examination rooms, two reading rooms and an embossing room for the translation of word into Braille.

The Faculty of Social Sciences Meeting Point which provides an area in which students can gather without fear of disturbing classes or offices was expanded and provided with additional lighting for night time use.

In the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, the Faculty office structure and reception process were reorganized to provide a more welcoming atmosphere for students. The Faculty has obtained financing and approval of the design for a student centre which should go to tender soon.

The Faculty-supported and Strategic Transformation Team-

funded modification and renovation of the Science and Mathematics Learning Center in the Faculty of Humanities and Education was completed within budget and in time to host the first programme initiative of the Center in the summer.

In recognition of the need for student housing, and the reality that the Campus offers the best value for accommodation in the surrounding areas, with the bonus of several co-curricula enrichment programmes for our students in halls of residence, the Deputy Principal's Office spearheaded with the Office of Student Services & Development, a project proposal for expanding housing for both undergraduate and graduate students by at least 400 beds – a project for which funding is now being sought. Expenditure on projects in the halls of residence was approximately \$10m in 2006–2007.





## *Student Administrative Support Services*

After more than a year of planning, the Student Administrative Support Services (SASS), a joint Bursary/Registry initiative, became fully operational in August 2007 in time for the start of semester I of the 2007–2008 academic year. The objectives and services offered by SASS are to:

- bring together several student administrative services in one location to create a “one stop” student customer care location
- improve the quality of service to students through carefully selected staff and the development and

implementation of customer service standards; and

- allow back office operations for student administrative services to proceed with limited interruptions.

The services to be offered in the current academic year include:

- dedicated front line service representatives to address a variety of queries/service needs relating to financial issues, registration, graduation, transcripts and the like
- distribution of forms (with the aim of eventually putting most online)

- a call centre dedicated to addressing “call in” queries
- cashiering
- production of student identification cards, and
- computer access to student records to facilitate query of their personal data.

Initial student feedback indicates that the unit is performing at a high standard. In particular, the staff selection process (using psychometric testing) and the training to which the staff was exposed are providing the desired results.

Other student oriented projects completed during the year included construction of ramps to allow easier access to lecture theatres and construction of walkways and wellness areas throughout the campus. The creation of a “wellness environment” at the front of the main library where students may relax and converse helped to make the library a more welcoming place. Students also took the opportunity to use their laptops outside, in areas near to the building, where they were able to benefit from wireless access.

The main improvement to the students sporting facilities during 2006–2007 was realised through the Sports Enhancement Project, an initiative managed by the Deputy Principal. The project resulted in the construction of a new multipurpose court adjacent to the indoor gymnasium. The court accommodates basketball, netball and volleyball. The new facility reduced the overuse of the indoor gymnasium for training sessions and some matches.



### Student Support Services

As in the previous year, the Mona Information Literacy Unit exceeded expectations. It increased the number of students, including distance education students by more than 18%, offering them information literacy training. Several one-hour orientation sessions for new students were held during the UWI orientation programme.

The increasing number of students participating in the Library’s Information Literacy programme suggests that this service is appreciated by a growing number of students and their lecturers.

The Library ensured that access to the complexities of the new integrated system was tailored for easy use. Tutorials were mounted online and handouts and presentations given. As a result of this, the transition from one system to the other was almost seamless.



Progress was made on the development of virtual reference services which will eventually allow students to send on-line their questions and receive responses promptly.

The Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences (FPAS) designed, under the leadership of a new lecturer in Mathematics, Dr Conall Kelly, and with support from the Principal's Office, a bridging programme in Mathematics for new students coming into the Faculty for the year 2007-2008. The FPAS and the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) also received permission from OBUS to run a programme of early admissions based upon performance in Unit 1 CAPE subjects, obviating the need to await the results for CAPE Unit 2 before making firm offers for entry into the Campus. This first step then allowed the Campus to initiate early contact with students who were being made

offers and to bring them on to the Campus for orientation during the summer period. It further enabled students to begin to seek student loans and other forms of financial support in good time before the start of the academic year. To facilitate this, the Campus contacted the governments of all contributing countries and the Student Loan Bureau in Jamaica seeking their cooperation, with encouragingly supportive responses.

These initiatives involved a sharing of experiences and the exchange of best practices that have impacted positively on the first impressions that new students have of UWI, and the ease with which they make their entry into our community. The full consequences of these initiatives are still to be analysed but it is hoped that the experiments will continue and that these initiatives will improve in efficiency and effec-

tiveness over the coming years. The policy of involving students in the Faculties' orientation and registration programmes has been expanded as a consequence of the initiatives.

The Campus, through the Office of Student Financing, was able to assist needy students to the tune of J\$69,136,223. Approximately J\$65 million was disbursed as scholarships and bursaries. The remainder was used to provide grants for books, meals and other expenses as well as a few short-term loans. The Office also received commitments amounting to approximately J\$1 million for 10 additional scholarships and bursaries for 2007–2008.

The Deputy Principal led the Campus representation on revision of tuition fees and the campaign to ensure payment of tuition fees (the “compulsory leave of absence” process). This initiative saw some 320 students getting extensions of time to pay and an additional 18 students experiencing exceptional financial hardship receiving support through a special grant initiative.

With the assistance of students, the Bursary upgraded and enhanced the look and feel of its web page commencing with the Billings & Receivables section of the site. The intention of the upgrade in the Billings section of the site was to make the page more interactive and to offer much more extended on-line services for students. Currently operational, this updated Billings and Receivables web page allows students to:

- request payments /refunds
- apply for fee letters
- request waiver of late fines

- request extension of fee payment date, subject to specific conditions
- pay fees on line
- check status of Student Loans Bureau loan applications
- view statement of accounts
- apply for direct deposit set up for payments to go directly to bank accounts
- apply for SLB refund Access FAQs and answers; and
- access the Bursary's weekly exchange rate sheets.

A public awareness programme to sensitise students to the new facilities is currently underway.

### Student Support Programmes

The Office of the Deputy Principal initiated, in collaboration with the Sports Department of the Office of Student Services and Development, a Sports Enhancement Project during the year. This aimed at enhancing recognition and support for sports on campus as an important part of affirming the holistic education emerging as a Campus objective. Included in the project were scholarships and bursaries for ten students excelling in sports, mobilising of greater student participation in sports, and the upgrade of some physical facilities for sports.

This intervention came in time for the Inter-Campus Student Games in 2007 held at Mona, which at the initiative of the Deputy Principal, were expanded from six to ten sports, and doubled in the size of student delegations per campus, from 65 to 135 athletes each. The Games were successfully staged, with Mona winning the most competitions. The initiative continues into the 2007–2008 academic year along similar lines.



There was institutional support for the expansion of the First Year Experience (FYE) project after an initial pilot year, when as an initiative of the Strategic Transformation Team (STT), and under the leadership of STT member, Professor Yvette Jackson, the Campus sought to aggressively introduce interventions aimed at student transformation. The programme was delivered in collaboration with the Office of Student Services and Development. Academic and senior administrative staff members who served as facilitators, attest first-hand to the qualitative difference and the impact the FYE had on first year commuting students. The expanded FYE programme targeted four hundred (400) commuting students, though for a number of reasons, only two hundred and fifty (250) students participated. A Commuting Students' Services and Development Manager (SSDM) whose remit includes oversight of the FYE

programme for the commuting student population was engaged.

The FYE is an offering that is gaining popularity internationally as a qualitative programme that positively impacts student learning and development. In some institutions, the programme is offered for credit. At the UWI, Mona, the three year old offering is delivered as a non-credit offering. The aim of the programme is to assist first year students to adjust responsibly to the challenges of campus life, to appreciate the concept of a university, and to maximise their potential in academic disciplines, cultural activities, leadership and service training, and through sports.

In academic year 2006-2007, the FYE programme was enlarged to target first year residential students, with SSDMs



in the halls overseeing the residential programme. Data from focus group discussions in each hall revealed that the student participants benefited and showed improvement in greater understanding of CARICOM, civic responsibility, an appreciation of cultural differences, a greater understanding of self, interpersonal relationships and the concept of a University. Each student who spoke at the programme's closing ceremony expressed the view that no student should pass through the University without having had the opportunity to benefit from programmes such as the FYE.

The final major event of the 2006–2007 FYE programme was the tour of the Campuses (and islands) of St Augustine in Trinidad and Cave Hill in Barbados by members of the FYE – Commuting Students and FYE – Halls. One participant, Ricardo Wilson, commented on the experience as follows: "Members of the FYE group found the visit to the islands enlightening and relaxing. A strong level of camaraderie and friendship was forged among the students and accompanying lecturers. The best of Mona shone throughout the trip, with discipline and decorum being exhibited on all fronts. What many of us will take with us as we continue our experience at Mona is the 'One University' concept we tuned into as we island hopped. The trip was a resounding success".

Since 2005 the Office of Student Services and Development has been delivering the "Aspiring Caribbean Leaders Seminar" for student leaders in Caribbean tertiary level institutions. The programme has been a resounding success, attracting aspiring leaders from all over the Anglophone Caribbean territories. To ensure meaningful engagement between presenters and participants, institutions other than Mona, are allowed no

more than two participants into the programme.

Support was provided for the annual student exchange with Universities in Columbia; for the Jamaica Medical Students Association in its successful bid to stage the International Federation of Medical Students' Congress in Jamaica in 2008; for a Summer Maths Camp for inner-city youths organised on campus. Additionally, a significant number of students were employed in part-time and summer jobs on campus.

Students are exposed to a number of other programmes aimed at developing their work-ready and leadership skills. These programmes include:

- The UWI Quality Leadership Programme
- The UWI Mentorship Programme
- Community Projects
- World of Work Seminars
- Dress for Success Seminar 2007
- Mock Interviews
- Career Awareness Month
- Career Exposition

The Mona School of Business also sought to expose students to the "soft skills" and made available courses in communication, business etiquette as well as action and service learning courses.

Student achievement is formally recognized annually at the level of the Faculty and through the OSS&D's Annual Students Awards Ceremony.



## *Development Seminar for Aspiring Leaders*

Reporting on the Office of Student Services and Development's "Aspiring Caribbean Leaders Seminar", participant Neil Griffith writes:

"The Mona Campus has been delivering this exciting seminar for a number of years. The relevance of this residential seminar was confirmed by the signing of the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) treaty in January 2006 and the endorsement by the CARICOM Secretariat of a programme of preparation of youth for the CSM.

The theme for the very intense and challenging 2007 seminar was "Caribbean Future: Defining Leadership for a Global Environment" which had participants immersed in presentations on leadership

styles, assimilation exercises and field trips. Topics were current and covered areas such as etiquette, accountability and integrity, the language barrier in the Caribbean, team building, Caribbean Single Market & Economy ... This seminar was ... interactive with the highlight being the ability to place everything that was learnt into practice in assigned group projects ...

One of the major points emerging was that an aspiring leader must be flexible and adaptable. When one of the presenters abruptly cancelled, Dr Thelora Reynolds stepped in and conducted the session. She led by example and showed how as leader one has to be able to expect the unexpected. Despite the short notice she delivered an excellent session. I am sure the

other participants would have taken note.

We the participants also had to expect the unexpected and in my opinion it was a good move by the organizers of the seminar in asking random participants to make introductory and thank-you speeches at short notice. This point of flexibility and adaptability was drilled home when, on the field trip to H.D. Hopwood & Company Limited, the CEO addressed the participants and made it a point to tell us that as aspiring leaders we need to be flexible.

I am of the opinion that more people should benefit from this seminar and I would like to hear that next year it has at least 50 participants from around the region ..."