



## SATISFYING STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

# Satisfying Student Expectations

**Global competition among universities makes it increasingly important to offer to our students services and facilities that are internationally competitive. To better respond to student needs, Campus administration worked assiduously in the 2008–09 academic year to improve our programme offerings, teaching delivery modalities and learning environment.**

## Welcoming New Students

Orientation activities are designed to familiarise new students with the physical campus, the development programmes and co-curricula activities that are available, and the faculty and staff of the Campus. In this way the orientation exercise is geared towards facilitating new students' early adjustment to the university experience. We added new dimensions to the orientation exercises in 2008–09. Not only were the activities at the faculty level extended and enhanced but there was also greater collaboration among the faculties and the Office of Student

services and Development (OSSD) towards engaging students in matters relevant to their university career. The newly introduced "Tent City" saw hundreds of students over the two-day period browsing displays to learn about student services and to interact with the staff who deliver those services. A record number of students attended the general sessions where they were introduced to the Campus leaders, and guided on matters related to issues such as stress management, personal development, safety, and rights and responsibilities. A special session for parents and spouses was also featured.





### Improved Administrative Systems and Processes

How does an academy with its age-old plant and received administrative systems, processes and culture adapt in the face of mounting local and international competition and a technology-savvy student population? The 2007–12 University Strategic Plan acknowledges that if the goals related to the pillars of the Plan – *Teaching and Learning, Graduate Studies, Research and Innovation* and *Support to the Open Campus* – are to be achieved, transformation of the administrative and managerial systems and processes is an imperative.

Accordingly, we advanced, at the central administration and faculty levels, aggressive initiatives to establish standards and improve the administrative services to our students. The Mona Information Technology Services (MITS) Applications team continued to work with users including Faculties, Graduate Studies, Admissions, Examinations, Student Records and the Office of Student Financing to deliver and/or refine existing processes. There were process enhancements and developments associated with the PeopleSoft, Banner Student and Computerised Maintenance Management Systems (TMA), leading to significant improvements in human resource management, registration, fee-payment and facilities management. For the first time students were able to go to the Campus website to guide their selection of classes and tutorials, instructors, times of class/tutorial and be directed to the location of classes. Some progress was made towards building facility analysis, employing TMA, so that useful information can be had towards more efficient allocation of classroom spaces.

Employing the Banner Student module, faculty load analysis was implemented and plans advanced for increased automation of undergraduate and graduate student online applications. MITS also implemented an online interactive “chat” service allowing users instant assistance, or to have their “chats” transferred to designated specialists within the Student Administrative Services and the MITS User Services Sections.

MITS grew the campus network by over 650 nodes, providing high-speed Internet connectivity for in excess of 4,200 computers, with special emphasis on student centric areas. The computer to student ratio, based on the computers provided in laboratories and other facilities, currently stands at better than one in ten. Over the period, the division also doubled the Campus broadband Internet bandwidth and expanded the Campus wireless network infrastructure, adding a further 20 access points, “Wi-Fi hotspots” as they are called.

In the area of e-commerce, MITS enabled refinement of transactions on transcript applications, thereby improving efficiency in the Examinations Section. Plans were well advanced to roll out two new Banner modules, one for payment of transcripts and the other to facilitate online applications for financial support. E-commerce support was also made available for UWI’s regional and international conferences.

At both the faculty and the central administration levels, mechanisms were put in place to monitor and get feedback on the newly implemented systems and services and their effectiveness in improving the care we give to our various users, principally our students.

The process of curriculum review to improve relevance is a continuous one at Mona. This led in the last academic year to creation of new programmes that address national development opportunities, challenges and priorities.

### Curriculum Review and Strengthening

An academic curriculum encompasses the range of activities, experiences and learning opportunities organised within programmes. The process of curriculum review to improve relevance is a continuous one at Mona. This led, in the last academic year, to creation of new programmes that address national development opportunities, challenges and priorities. Of particular note are the BSc degrees in Medical Physics and Bio-Engineering, Digital Media Production, Banking and Finance, Electronics Engineering, Tropical Horticulture, and Management Studies (Entrepreneurship). The last was designed to produce graduates with the requisite entrepreneurial training and tools to create jobs for themselves and others, while contributing to economic growth and development. Its aim is to develop the students' understanding of the process and context of entrepreneurship, as well as to provide key concepts that will enable students to take

advantage of the mushrooming entrepreneurial opportunities that accompany the increased investments in the hospitality and the general tourism sector. The development of this programme is especially important in light of the graduate tracer study, recently undertaken by the University, which revealed that while some 90% of Mona graduates found employment within a year of graduation, only 1% of them were employed as entrepreneurs.

In scheduling programme delivery the Campus was careful to consider the varied needs of our student population, which comprises some 36% part-time, mostly working, students. The most recent initiative in this regard was the introduction of the Weekend Degree Programme where select degree programmes are offered on weekends only. The first to be rolled out in the current academic year were the Bachelor of Science in Management Studies (Accounting) and the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance.







### ICT in Programme Delivery

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) plays a major role in stimulating student learning and is, therefore, indispensable in instructional delivery. During the academic year, there was an increase in the demand for support for courses by the OurVLE/Online Learning and Face-to-Face Management Systems. This resulted from the growth in various programmes, including the UWI School of Nursing online training and face-to-face programmes, the courses offered at the Western Campus: the newly introduced Social Sciences Weekend Programmes; the BEd Secondary Distance Project; face-to-face OurVLE courses and the Masters of Education summer and online courses. MITS, through its Instruction Support Systems Section, responded to the increased demand for online courses. Some 650 courses are now online in Ourvle, with as many as 7,818 students accessing these courses in 2008–09. OurVLE now hosts a total of 31,374 users including academic, administrative staff and students from across the entire Caribbean region.

Over the years, the Campus has been steadily enriching the technology environment, equipping classrooms with multimedia projectors, re-equipping outmoded computer laboratories and building



## A Virtual Laboratory

**A 50-seater Physics Virtual Laboratory was designed to enhance teaching and learning, including research, at the undergraduate level. Funded by the University and the Government of Jamaica, the laboratory houses state-of-the-art software, hardware and teaching technology, which have already begun to transform how some areas of physics are taught.**



new ones. This year, MITS outfitted lecture theatres in the new facilities of the Mathematics Department, the Law Faculty and the UWI School of Nursing (UWISON) with state-of-the-art multimedia teaching and learning technologies. It enabled wider accessibility to computers in the libraries, upgraded lecture rooms and theatres and established a Virtual Laboratory in the Department of Physics. This laboratory uses technology to bring to life major concepts in physics, enabling an enhanced experience for students.

In the Faculty of Medical Sciences the stage is now set to expand the use of videoconferencing to teach students at remote sites, as well as to access lectures and tutorials from international institutions. Already arrangements are in place to share lectures with Emory University Medical School in the immediate future.

UWISON with state-of-the-art multimedia teaching and learning technologies





### International Collaboration Strengthening Curriculum Development

Our international collaboration continues to strengthen the curriculum in other ways. Notably, our partnership with Taiyuan University of Technology, China led to the establishment of a Confucius Institute on the Campus. Under the umbrella of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, the Institute will promote Chinese Culture and Language (Mandarin).

### Peer-led Learning

Dedicated to providing an environment that creates and maintains enthusiasm for Chemistry and high quality instruction, the Chemistry Department introduced the Peer-Led Team Learning project. This is designed to improve the learning experiences and performance of introductory level students through small group workshops with peer leaders. The pilot project produced satisfactory results and received positive feedback from the peer leaders as well as the participants.

### Co-curricula programmes

Complementing the strictly academic programmes are the student enhancement and co-curricula activities geared towards holistic development of the UWI graduate. In academic year 2008–09, Faculties continued to infuse Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) strategies in some courses. The Social Sciences Faculty developed a pilot programme in Speaking across the Curriculum (SAC). The various co-curricula programmes run by the Office of Student Services and Development also continued to coach students in communication, leadership and team-building techniques.

The work of the “cultural” societies continued to add value to student experience on the Campus. There were some 80 clubs and societies operating during the academic year, including the UWI Visual

Arts and the Circle K Clubs that provided students with opportunities for artistic and other cultural expressions. Sports in student life received due attention. In keeping with the Sports Development thrust on the Campus, a number of sporting facilities received long deserved upgrades. Mona’s students continued to outshine their competitors from colleague campuses in inter-campus sporting competitions.





## Guardian Life Teaching Award

The University of the West Indies, Mona in collaboration with Guardian Life Limited hosted the UWI/ Guardian Life Premium Teaching Award at the Mona Visitors' Lodge and Conference Centre. The Award is designed to recognise outstanding members of the academic staff for teaching excellence and to enhance the quality of teaching at UWI. **Drs Michelle Hamilton** and **Michael Ponnambalam**, both of the Department of Basic Medical Sciences, were recipients of the 2008–09 Awards.



Above: Dr Ponnambalam receiving his award from Professor Shirley. Below: Dr Hamilton displays her award with Guardian Life president, Earl Moore

### Teaching Instruction Upgrade

The Mona Campus continued its aggressive programmes of improving the quality of instruction through various workshops and the introduction of a post-graduate Teaching Certificate programme offered through the Instructional Development Unit (IDU). Many members of staff registered in the teaching certificate programme, and for at least one of the several modules/workshops to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. Among these were Building Learning Communities in Cyber Space, Design/Repurposing Courses Online, Teaching Skills Workshops, Writing Instructional Objectives, Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, Interactive Multimedia Power Point 1, and Teaching with Technology-The Learner Centered Way.

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, the working group on Enhancing Student Learning remained active over the year, and discussions began on formulating a philosophy of teaching for the Faculty. The



Faculty itself mounted workshops that catered to staff's personal and professional development.

The Medical Education Unit held three seminars to improve the pedagogical skills of teachers in the Faculty of Medical Sciences. Three members of the Faculty were registered in graduate programmes in medical education in overseas institutions, and a seminar was held for associate staff at remote sites. The staff in UWISON had extensive training in the use of simulators.



### Research Informing and Strengthening the Curriculum

The primary distinction of a UWI curriculum, that which distinguishes it from those of other English-speaking Caribbean tertiary education institutions, is its base in the academy's long-standing research culture. The past year saw the continuation of a thrust at the level of the Faculties towards increasing research output to enhance not only curriculum development but also the international standing of the university. Of special note is the initiative in the Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) through which its Research Resource Centre in the Dean's Office, as well as its links with the UWI Tropical Medicine Research Institute (TMRI), were strengthened. The

Faculty instituted the FMS/TMRI Fellowships, giving young faculty members the opportunity to spend time in the TMRI to improve their research skills and develop research agendas. The faculty members are expected to return to their respective departments to lead research initiatives there. Currently there are two faculty members in the programme, and plans are to enroll three to five annually.

All Faculties recorded improvements in the quantum of research publications. That faculty members are increasingly invited to guest edit international research volumes is indicative of a growing recognition of the quality research that is being undertaken at Mona.

### Improved Graduate Studies Administration

In 2008–09 there was an overall 2% increase in graduate student enrolment. The University's target for graduate student enrolment is 20% of total enrolment. The Campus surpassed this target, recording an impressive 24% enrolment. The high demand for industry-needed graduate education saw the development of a number of new graduate programmes, among them, the MSc MATE (Marine and Terrestrial Ecosystems: Assessment, Conservation and Management), and the the MSc in Agricultural Entrepreneurship.

### Research Graduate Programmes

Nineteen percent (19%) of graduate students were enrolled in research programmes. The University's aim is that by the end of the Strategic Plan period, that is, by 2012 we will achieve a 25% ratio of research graduate to total graduate enrolment target. To this end, the academic year witnessed the continuation of a dynamic programme, begun in 2007, of reviewing and instituting processes and mechanisms to strengthen Graduate Studies. Arising from the review, there was a deliberate decision to strengthen graduate student enrolment and supervision criteria, as well as to foster improved throughput rates for graduate research programmes.

## Mona Named Three-Time Champions in UWI/FCIB Case Analysis Competition

**The Faculty of Social Sciences, UWI, Mona in association with the First Caribbean International Bank hosted the 2009 UWI/First Caribbean Case Analysis Competition at Mona.** Two non-UWI participants entered the competition, The University of Technology (UTech), and The University of Southern Caribbean in Trinidad. As in preceding years, the Mona, St Augustine and Cave Hill Campuses also competed. The competition is designed to improve the analytical, oratorical and presentation skills of participating tertiary education students by exposing a team of students from each institution to a business case which they are required to analyse and present.

The Competition which started in 2007 was as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of the West Indies and First Caribbean International Bank aimed at



promoting the international use of actual Caribbean business situations for student case analysis and presentation. The cases are prepared by Mona academics, Dr Noel Reynolds and Mr Archibald Campbell, under the UWI/ FCIB initiative and have been published, circulated internationally and are currently in use.

The Mona Team achieved their third consecutive win in the Competition. For the 2009 year the team's task was to analyse

the vehicle used for the merger of Barclay's Bank and CIBC, the impact on minority shareholders, the consolidation of financial statements, the treatment of goodwill, uniting banking and accounting systems, and the challenges presented by staffing and transitioning.

The Mona Team was awarded US\$1,500 for first place and was also awarded US\$500, having been voted Most Original Case Analysis. Tifain Taylor of the UWI, Mona team also walked away with the Best Overall Presenter Prize and US\$500. Other members of the Mona Team included, Mechar Alam, who won the Team Spirit prize, Tenneil Rashford and Sherica Lewars.

## The Postgraduate Learning Commons

The Mona Library opened its new learning space for postgraduates to provide quality support to students.

**The Postgraduate Learning Commons (PGLC) is a communal space catering for the information, learning and social needs of the postgraduate community.** Facilities and services include: a computer lab with 32 computers equipped with a wide range of software; wireless connectivity; a laptop loan service; a photocopier, scanner and printer; a conference room and six seminar/study rooms with white boards and computers. The PGLC will foster collaboration among librarians, faculty members, IT staff and other Learning Commons partners to enhance students' writing, research and information literacy skills in a single location.

Since its opening in February 2009, the PGLC conducted a number of sessions on Endnote and database searching for postgraduate students. It hosted postgraduate seminars put on by various departments. Professor Rex Welshon, visiting Fulbright scholar, also delivered a special seminar "Critical Thinking Essentials" to postgraduates. The PGLC librarian offered one-on-one assistance in locating information, among other things. From a "Quick Poll" in May 2009, postgraduates rated seminar rooms, lounge seating and staffing highly. Data collected show that the group study rooms are in great demand, especially after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays and on Sundays.



The difficulty of funding research degrees, however, remains a major concern at Mona. Sixty per cent of research students were registered part-time in the 2008–09 academic year. This has serious implications for throughput rates. The Campus Central Administration's initiative to markedly increase the value of postgraduate scholarships, as well as the 33% increase in awards at the departmental level, are important steps towards improving research graduate student enrolment and throughput rates.

In strengthening supervision, the Campus supplemented local faculty resources with regional and international support. Research students benefitted from cross-campus as well as international supervision and had, in addition, both cross-campus and international members serving on their advisory committees. Our strong relationships with reputed universities such as Brown and Cape Town led to joint externally funded projects that serve to boost student research.

We augmented existing seminar series for graduate students and exercised more stringent care in reviewing research papers to ensure that appropriate standards of referencing and citations are maintained. In some cases, Faculties developed additional courses with a view to improving



*PhD candidate Arlene Bailey successfully defending her thesis*

students' capacity in research methodology. In some instances, there was complete restructuring of the research methods relating to the preparation of research papers. That the Library's turnaround time for the scrutiny of postgraduate theses has been cut by more than half will aid in the effort to significantly improve throughput rates.

The newly formed Chemistry Association of Postgraduate Students (CAPS) in the Chemistry Department allows structured interaction among both graduate and undergraduate students and academic staff, in this way aiding professional development.

### **Improved Graduate Student Facilities**

Significant improvements in the management of graduate student services at the central level continued in the 2008–09 academic year. The Graduate Studies Office was refurbished and its staff rationalised. The refurbishing project included demolition of the entire office space, redesign of the area, relocation of the main entrance, as well as landscaping the entrance grounds to the building. The renovations have added a more student-friendly appeal and should facilitate improved efficiency, effectiveness and student and staff morale. Plans are well underway to enlarge the capacity of graduate student housing facilities by some 800%, beginning in the current academic year.



## Modernising Library Facilities and Services

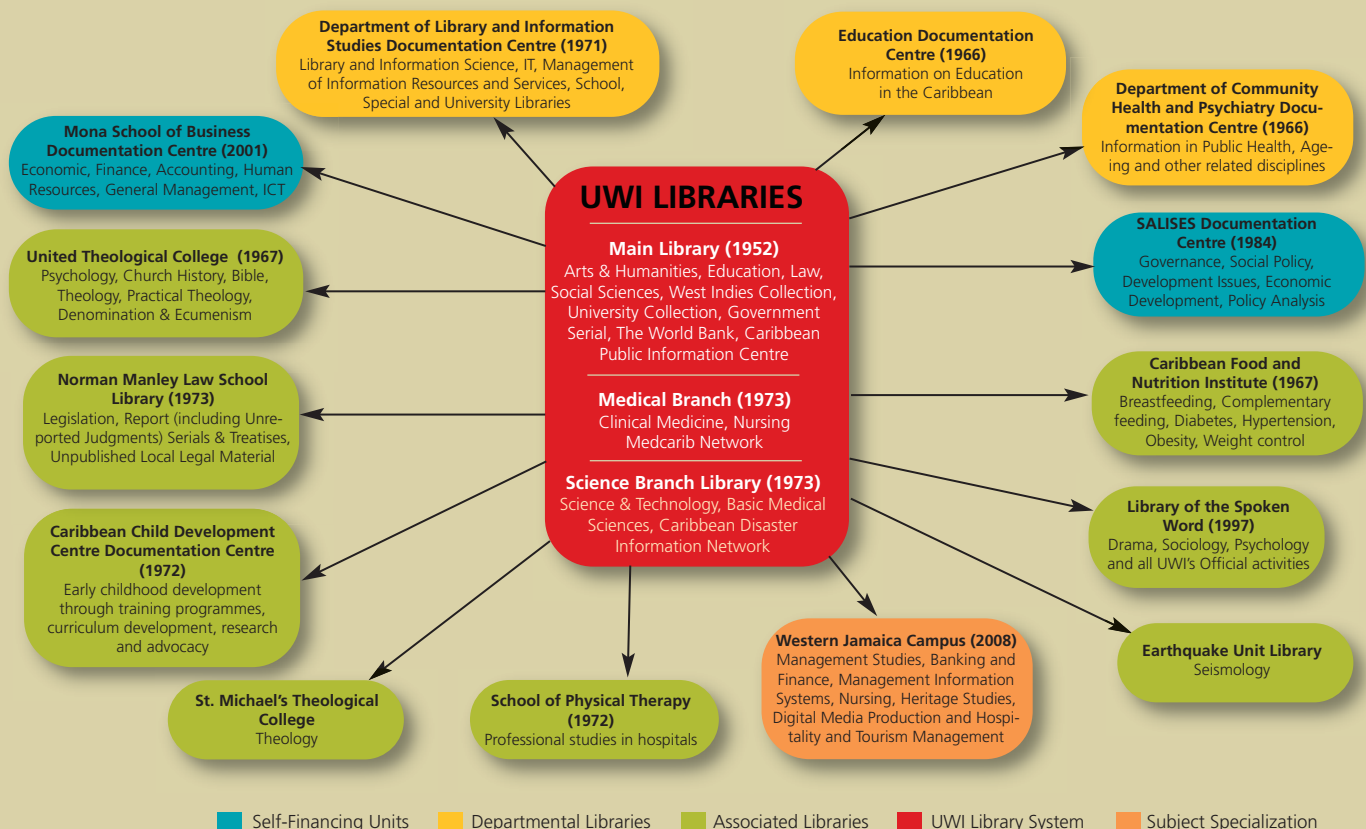
Now open virtually all day, seven days per week, the Library renewed its focus on collection development to enhance the Campus's teaching and learning activities. Much emphasis was placed on equipping the Western Jamaica Campus (WJC) and the Mona Library for the new programmes that came on stream in the current academic year. These include programmes in Law, Engineering, Agriculture and Advanced Nursing.

The Library holdings increased significantly during 2008–09. In comparison with the previous year there were some 58% more acquisition orders inclusive of orders for e-books, signalling the library's commitment to moving towards development of a virtual library. One hundred and thirty-

three (133) e-books were added, increasing the collection to 4,460 titles. E-book usage was on the increase, moving from 484 to 1,543 over the period 2006–2009. The figure for 2009 is of interest since it shows that long before year-end, usage had already surpassed that for the entire 2008 period. This, coupled with the increased use of electronic databases, indicates a growing trend in the use of electronic material.

The library's launching of UWI-MINET (UWI Mona Information Network) marked a significant milestone. Capitalising on economies of scale, UWI-MINET connects all UWI and affiliate libraries to facilitate key centralised services. This will have the effect of reducing the volume of traffic in the Main Library, while at the same time making material more easily available to users at various locations on the Campus.

## UWI Mona Information Network (UWI-MINET)







### Physical Infrastructure Supporting Quality Curriculum

The challenges to accommodate the near 15,000-strong student population in what is virtually an old plant remains. Shortage of space threatens the sustainability and quality of our programmes. There are instances where academic staff offices are shared; and this affects the ability of staff to perform their required counselling and student advising functions in privacy. Not infrequently, students are unable to find seats in lecture rooms and theatres.

Guided by the reality of limited additional resources, the Campus continues to maximise its use of existing facilities. Through innovative approaches, flexibility of staff and more efficient use of resources, especially in scheduling laboratories and human resource deployment, and with additional temporary/part time staff, we successfully addressed the challenges in the past academic year. Most notably, additional laboratory streams in physics, life sciences, computing and mathematics, as well as a Saturday chemistry laboratory stream (accommodating nearly 100 additional students) were introduced.



We refurbished old buildings to accommodate the 186 new Law intake as well as the Mathematics Department which was separated from the Computer Sciences Section. Plans were advanced and developed for new building complexes to house the new Law Faculty and the Basic Medical Sciences Department with income derived from the related full-financing programmes. The Projects Office completed the renovation of the Social Sciences Lecture Theatre. This resulted in an increase of student seating by 30%, positively impacting the anticipated increase in enrolment. The work carried out, which included painting, new seating,

# New Learning Spaces





## Repairs and repainting of all buildings on Queensway and Ring Road were

floor tiles and ceiling, also resulted in a more student-friendly atmosphere.

We continued the programme of substantially increasing student spaces on campus for the benefit of commuting students. Repairs and repainting of all buildings on Queensway and Ring Road were completed to enhance the entrance to and the landscape of the Campus. Additional pagodas were erected to provide spaces for students' intellectual and social interaction. They featured combo-tables, access to electrical outlets and wireless internet service. These student spaces with their architecturally-pleasing design and strategic location near eating facilities have been overwhelmingly successful.

There was significant refurbishing and expansion of bathroom facilities. Modest refurbishing of some faculty offices took place and we acquired new fur-

niture for some classrooms. Together with the completion of extensions to the School of Nursing (UWISON) building, these carefully planned improvements to the physical facilities had the effect of enhancing the teaching and learning environment. The improved UWISON facilities have been furnished with state-of-the-art teaching/learning simulators that enable self-learning and opportunities to participate in and experience virtual laboratory procedures. The renovation and expansion project saw doubling of existing office spaces, addition of well-needed classrooms and two lecture theatres for the benefit of the growing student-nurse population. The expanded building has allowed the School to offer more programmes and opportunities to students, who otherwise would have been turned away because of space constraints, as well as facilitated annual growth in student intake. Not only has the renovated and



## completed to enhance the entrance to and the landscape of the Campus

expanded building contributed positively to the University's image, but it has also ensured significant additional contributions to future income streams.

Completion of the renovation and expansion of the University Bookshop also occurred in academic year 2008–09. The structure was more than doubled, and currently accommodates a much broader spectrum of educational and recreational items for the growing student population, the University and surrounding communities. It has also afforded staff a more comfortable working environment, boosting their morale and enabling better service to customers. As with the expansion of the UWISON building, expansion of the bookshop has positively impacted the Campus's image and income generation potential.

Work continued on the expansion of the Mona Information Technology Services (MITS) facility. This

will allow for the addition of more offices, facilitate centralisation of the department's operations, as well as house a much needed Data Centre that will provide increased storage capacity and improvements in IT transactions on the campus. The Data Centre will also positively impact our communication with external communities.

With our commitment to our students as our main resource, we have steadily and incrementally improved our physical facilities while visioning the possible. The plans afoot for creating modern international sporting facilities, a state-of-the-art student centre and a complex to house the Law Faculty have been made possible through income generated from self-financing programmes, and collaboration with external partners such as the Jamaica Football Federation (JFF), the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) and the Government of China.

### Students' Personal and Financial Security

Students expect and, indeed, deserve a rigorous academic experience free from additional concerns about matters such as security and inadequate financing. Both these issues, because of our external environment, present real challenges at Mona. The Campus renewed its contract with Guardsman Limited, the security providers, but transferred some responsibilities to a newly-developed Campus Police Unit directly answerable to the Director of Security, ACP Keith Gardner. We extended the use of surveillance cameras, and a Monitoring Centre is being established towards more efficient and cost-effective security.

We were less successful in our efforts to assist needy students. Despite aggressive attempts to source financial support for these, the increase over the previous year in scholarships, bursaries and

other kinds of financial aid amounted to just over \$2M. We increased student employment in order to support more of our needy students, while being careful not to adversely affect their academic career, even as we provide them with useful work experience. As indicated earlier, there was a 10.5% increase in the number of students accepting loans from the Student Loans Bureau. The Campus also facilitated students in paying tuition fees through approved payment plans.

Significantly, the Campus pursued its strong lobby to Government for revising the student loan facility to allow loans without collateral, where payback is contingent on income, where there is a longer moratorium after graduation, and where Forgiveness is applied for employment in high priority sectors in the public service. This lobby is on-going, though the worsening economic climate does not augur well for speedy resolution of the issues.



