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**On being a good steward\***  
**Kingston, Jamaica**

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Greetings,

Let me welcome you to this graduation ceremony of the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies. It is a pleasure to see so many parents and friends and such a wide cross section of the Jamaican public, which gives me much comfort in that it indicates the wide range of persons who have stake and interest in what is done here. This is especially reassuring as institutions like ours need all the support we can garner in these trying times. The times are trying globally, regionally and nationally and they continue to try the nerve and resilience of institutions like ours.

At the graduation ceremony in Cave Hill I cited a quotation from one America's more famous educators. Clarke Kerr who said:

*"Taking as a starting point 1530 when the Lutheran Church was founded, some 66 institutions that existed then still exist today in the Western world in some recognizable form; the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Parliaments of Iceland and the Isle of Man and 62 universities. They have experienced wars, revolutions, depressions and industrial transformations, and have come out less changed than almost any other segment of society".*

The survival has not been because they have been fossilized or stultified and therefore impervious to currents of change, but because they have been adaptable to the needs of the times and continually proven themselves useful to society. I like to think that one of the overarching qualities of our University and perhaps one of its characteristics, that is not often appreciated, is that it is a good steward. It exhibits good stewardship and I will examine several aspects of the notion of stewardship.

First I am pleased with the University as a whole and this Campus especially for its stewardship in relation to our governments. Institutions like ours can indeed act as agents of the governments which are still their major financial contributor. But I believe that the notion of governments as

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principals and our University as their agent has less salience herein the Caribbean and at this juncture of our history. If I review the evolution of our interactions over the years, I prefer to qualify the relationship now as one of stewardship. In the context of good public management and efficient contractual arrangements, the relationship of stewardship implies that there is goal alignment between the parties. The essence of a stewardship relationship is that there should and must be congruence of goals and neither seeks to enhance its utility at the expense of the other. The University and the Caribbean governments in the areas in which they interact have the same goals. I can demonstrate this no better than by citing the National Development Plan for Jamaica Vision 2030 which is still current.

That Plan says:

*“The old paradigm for generating prosperity was focused on exploiting the lower forms of capital -sun, sea and sand tourism - and exporting sub-soil assets and basic agricultural commodities. These ‘basic factors’ cannot create the levels of prosperity required for sustained economic and social development. The new route is the development of the country’s higher forms of capital – the cultural, human, knowledge and institutional capital stocks.”*

The forms of creating higher forms of capital are at the root of the University’s mission and are played out throughout its own Strategic Plan. However, one of the fundamental ingredients for the optimization of that stewardship relationship is that there be trust between the partners and in this context, I continue to note with gratitude the degree of trust that our governments continue to place in us. When I see the levels of oversight that can extend to extremes of intimate involvement in the details of the internal management of Universities that take place in some other countries, I am grateful for the relationship that exists between us and our governments. It is not that there is always agreement; it is not that there is always accommodation of what we may consider as legitimate needs, but even in the face of the economic strictures of our time, there is trust. Every system must take its turn from time to time at the wheel of misfortune and we have-often ours is economic misfortune, but that does not and will not we hope break those bonds of trust that permit this stewardship mode of operation.

It is interesting that the notion of stewardship in many US universities is applied to the cultivation of relationships with private benefactors. It is not that we do not welcome private benefactors, but we still hold to the view that public support by our governments is critical for the operation of institutions like ours.

But I see our stewardship also in the more traditional ways. I have been struck at the almost universality of approach in the conceptualizing of the operation of public systems. I know the health systems best, but the same can be seen in national economic arrangements as well. There is the notion of efficiency, fairness in allocation of resources, and stewardship implying the management of resources to ensure the

sustainability of the system. Stewardship in this context implies the husbanding of resources so that those who come after will be able to enjoy them and also the application of the resources such that there is maximum efficiency in goal realization.

In commenting on this aspect, I must begin by complimenting the Principal and his staff for their careful management of the natural resources of this beautiful valley of Mona. No one who comes here can fail to be impressed by the ineffable beauty of the place and how it has been maintained. We are so proud of this heritage that our Business Development Office has established the UWI Mona Campus Culture and Heritage Tour. This tour seeks to promote the culture and heritage sites of the Mona Campus and share our campus with others and is popular with high school history students and visitors to the Campus (local and overseas). I expect that it will become an increasingly popular tourist attraction. Other countries with less beautiful and interesting sites include their academic institutions in their places of tourist interest. A major contribution of this tour is to complement the initiatives of the Office of the Campus Registrar whereby specific high schools are targeted with the expectation of increasing enrolment at the UWI. The tours promote the UWI as a first choice for college seekers and in 2010-2011, approximately 600 high school students toured the Campus.

But of course the stewardship of which we are proudest is our contribution to the human capital of which the Jamaican Plan speaks, by nurturing and educating the young. The 2010/2011 academic year saw a 6% increase in the total registration of students over the previous year, with approximately 15,300 students being registered. There were 4,761 new students which represents a 15% increase over last year. It is gratifying to note that approximately 3,000 of the on-campus students are registered for higher degrees. I am pleased to note that the academic year 2010/2011 saw an increase of 10% in the number of males registered compared with last year and this represents the result of the efforts that are being made to target males specifically and interest them in higher education. I am also pleased to tell you that the percentage of males in the graduating class is the highest it has been in the past 10 years. The principal and his staff are to be congratulated on this achievement.

It is important to note that 1,170 or approximately 8% of the 15,300 students enrolled in academic year 2010/2011 were from CARICOM countries outside of Jamaica and 2% of on-campus students were international. So although there is a natural preponderance of Jamaican students here, the campus is definitely multinational.

A total of 2,494 first degrees were awarded and 215 of these obtained First Class Honors. I must congratulate the Faculty over this achievement. The majority of degrees and of First Class Honors were in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Over the past 16 years this campus has graduated almost 31,000 persons with first degrees. Most graduates are in the age group 20-24 years, but it is pleasing to see about 1% of the graduates are over the age of 50 years. We also welcome the first cohort of 76 graduates including 19 postgraduates in eleven disciplines from the Western Jamaica Campus. They did very well with several First Class Honors among them.

Our students participate in as wide a range of courses as you will find in any good University. The Campus maintains its sensitivity to the development needs of the country and the region and thus continues to restructure and revise its programs. For example, six new postgraduate academic programs were introduced last year and I was particularly pleased to note the MPhil/PhD in Nursing and the Masters in Physical Therapy.

You will have noticed the amount of building activity taking place. This includes the construction of two new halls of residence to provide 1,000 new rooms for student accommodation and the buildings for the Faculty of Law and a new Basic Medical Sciences building.

I will mention only a few of the many significant Campus achievements for the year. The Mona School of Business MBA team received First Place in the 2011 Opportunity Funding Cooperative Venture Challenge (OFCVC) - a Business Plan competition amongst historically Black US Colleges and Universities. The School also received accreditation from the International Association of MBAs (AMBA) for achieving what AMBA describes as the highest standard in Postgraduate Business Education for its EMBA and MBA programs. The recognition notes that AMBA's accreditation is earned only by Business Schools with the "best programs". AMBA's accreditation is internationally recognized as the global standard for all MBA, MBM and DBA programs.

On Tuesday, August 9, 2011 the UWI, Mona Social Services Company launched the ***Fathers' Inc, Barry Chevannes Fathers' Resource Centre and The UWI Mona SOURCE***, at the Bryce Hill Plaza in August Town. The initiative continues Mona's efforts to foster the sustainable development of surrounding communities. It seeks to build positive family relationships and bring state-of-the-art services to the Greater August Town community.

Fathers' Inc, the brainchild of the late Professor Barry Chevannes, is designed to highlight exceptional fathers; teach fathers how to nurture; and train fathers to become role models. In the current social climate there can be few more worthy initiatives and I am proud that the campus should honor Barry Chevannes' memory in this way.

At the individual level, Dr. Marcia Roye, Lecturer in Biotechnology was presented with the L'Oreal-UNESCO Special Fellowship Grant 2011, in Paris to mark the centennial of Marie Curie's Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Two Jamaicans, both Mona graduates were the recipients of the 2011 Rhodes scholarship. Dr. David Walcott and Dr. Luke Foster both graduated with Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees, First Class Honors, from the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Mona. Dr. Walcott was selected as the Jamaican Rhodes scholar and Dr. Foster the Commonwealth Caribbean Rhodes scholar. Both recipients will proceed on full scholarships to Oxford University in 2011. Krystal Tomlinson a final year Social Science student placed first in the Public Speaking Competition at the 31<sup>st</sup> World Universities Debating Championships in which over 200 Universities from 61 countries participated. Ricardo Brooks a final year student in Humanities and Education placed fourth.

I wish to congratulate several of the staff on their recent awards.

Professor Maureen Samms-Vaughan, Professor of Child Health, Child Development and Behaviour, Department of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Child Health on receiving the Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence for 2010, for Contribution to public Service; Professor Terrence Forrester, Tropical Medicine Research Institute, on receiving the Institute of Jamaica's Golden Musgrave Medal for Contribution to Science and Professor Wayne McLaughlin, Department of Basic Medical Sciences, on receiving the Gleaner Honour Award for Science and Technology, for producing scientific research results that have positively affected agricultural production in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

We must also congratulate our Vice-Chancellor on being awarded the Cacique Crown of Honor by Guyana-its third highest national honor.

There is a thriving research enterprise on campus and I will only mention one piece which was actually brought to my attention by the editor of the Journal. Professor Sue Walker and her colleagues published recently seminal papers in the Lancet series on child development which has drawn considerable comment in relation to the risk factors of early childhood that produce greater inequality of later development.

But there is not only excellence in academics. Two of Mona's athletes, Hansle Parchment and Jason Young won medals for Jamaica at the recently concluded World University Games held in Shenzhen, China. Hansle, a third year student in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, won Jamaica's sixth gold medal in the men's 110m hurdles and ran a personal best of 13.24 seconds. Parchment is now Jamaica's third fastest sprint hurdler in the event. He is also the Gibson Relay record holder in the event. Jason, a second year student in the Faculty of Social Sciences placed joint second in the 200 meters event. I wish you to note that both are recipients of UWI, Mona Sports Scholarships. This is an initiative of the Principal to provide an academic opportunity for promising athletes and strengthen the sports culture on Campus and he tells me that the Mona Pelican football team will be playing in Jamaica's Premier league very soon.

I am sometimes chagrined that the public knows so little of what the Campus does in its role as steward of the young entrusted to its care. It takes more than provision of data and information and inspiring Faculty to produce good graduates. Thus the Campus caters to a wide range of student needs and the objective of student-centeredness that figures prominently in our Strategic Plan is taken as seriously as any other part. I know that students encounter and have to solve a myriad of problems during their university careers and I salute those of you who have had to struggle through these problems to reach this day. There has been a refocusing of the Office of Student Services and Development to cater for the whole of the campus student population with a special effort to cater to the commuting student body.

There is an Academic Support Unit which is committed to facilitating student academic success through the use of targeted workshops and creative collaborations.

This initiative will therefore be sustained through relationships among faculties, centers and offices across the campus. The broad aims of the Unit are:

- 1) To assist students who are at risk academically;
- 2) To improve students' academic performance through intervention in quantitative and communication courses;
- 3) To decrease the frequency of academic probation and dismissal;
- 4) To increase retention rates and assist students to graduate within the original time-frame;
- 5) To help student athletes improve their academic performance

There is an innovative program for leadership development which challenges students to identify and utilize leadership learning moments as they interact with the campus and each other. There is a rigorous, intensive training program in which they are introduced critical principles for effective leadership. There is a worthy pilot program for providing breakfast to commuting students during the examination times.

There is a well- staffed Student Health Service with a well- equipped University Health Centre offering primary medical care for all students and there are approximately nineteen thousand student (19,000) visits annually. Students are referred to the University Hospital when indicated. There is an active counseling service staffed by 3 Counselors and Clinical Psychologists and 1 Psychiatrist. The Unit offers professional support for psychological, interpersonal and other emotional issues. There are also well staffed nursing, pharmacy and dental services available.

The Health Service is proud of its Wellness Initiatives - The Health Centre sees itself as the nerve center for wellness on the Mona Campus. With this in mind, it has implemented a comprehensive wellness program which targets both staff and students. Research, health promotion and outreach activities are components of the Wellness program. Special interventions such as the sexual safety program provides free HIV testing and commodities related to safer sex (e.g. condoms) which are available free of cost.

To you alumni to be, I say good luck and may you continue to make the University and this campus proud of you. I urge and entreat you to active interest in what goes on here and be active in your alumni associations.

Finally let me thank the parents and loved ones who have supported you. I hope they feel pleased with the result and will continue to support our University and its stewardship functions for many more years to come.