

Conference - Institutionalizing Best Practice in Higher Education

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR
STUDENTS: DEVELOPING
ENGAGED AND EMPLOYABLE
CITIZENS**

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THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

The Current Higher Education Context

- ⦿ This context is characterised by – large increases in student numbers;
- ⦿ The notion of education as a product in the marketplace and an increasingly competitive marketplace
- ⦿ An increased role of the private sector and even the emergence of the full scale private university.

The Entrepreneurial University*

- ⦿ Increasingly in our region higher education institutions even when state-supported have to be entrepreneurial and innovative in their pursuit of alternative and/or additional financial resources.
- ⦿ The emergence of the entrepreneurial university raises many larger philosophical questions on what is the role of the university in the current context of the Global South.
- ⦿ How can our university fulfil its research and teaching mandate, as well as its mandate for critical reflection, social action and public service and maintain its economic viability?

* Eduardo Aponte-Hernández* Ángeles Molina-Iturrondo, Research and Knowledge Creation in the Caribbean for Endogenous Development and Building Autonomous Knowledge Societies: The University of Puerto Rico and Beyond Diaspora, UNESCO.

Student Engagement

- ⦿ In this context universities have recognised the imperative to pay attention to the student experience and the extent to which students are engaged with the process of teaching and learning;
- ⦿ This becomes critical to recruitment where word of mouth is the most important recruitment mechanism as well as the renewed focus on alumni giving .
- ⦿ But how do we create the kind of alumni who want to give back, alumni who were engaged with and enjoyed their university experience;
- ⦿ Alumni who left with more than a piece of paper; who developed a sense of social responsibility beyond their own personal career and economic success.

The University of the West Indies

- ⦿ The oldest Higher education institution in the English-speaking Caribbean
- ⦿ A key regional institution serving seventeen (17) Caribbean countries;
- ⦿ A research university with a commitment to teaching, research and public service;
- ⦿ An institution with a responsibility to provide intellectual leadership, creative and critical thinking and to stimulate innovation, equity and development.

Re-thinking the Meaning of Higher Education – Beyond Credentialism

- ⦿ Our education system has become a competitive race towards credentialism;
- ⦿ In this region, children age 9-10 are prepared for competitive examinations and good performance in this brings success to begin preparing for new examinations etc.
- ⦿ For many of our students and sometimes their parents, the main aim of (university) education is to provide the credentials for employment and future personal economic success;

The Higher Education Context

- ① Education as learning, personal growth and development and even knowledge acquisition **is a minority view.**
- ② For the majority of students today, a university education is a means to an end and not an end in itself.
- ③ But increasingly students themselves realize that something is missing, something which asks them to be more than they have been asked to be.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Core Values

The UWI Strategic Plan 2012-2017 identifies Core Values which are supposed to characterise what we do as a university. They include:

- ⦿ Maintaining a commitment to the pursuit of excellence
- ⦿ Assisting students to develop a capacity for independent thought and critical analysis
- ⦿ Stimulating self-awareness and social awareness
- ⦿ Nurturing a keen sense of individual and social responsibility
- ⦿ Building respect for cultural diversity and the rule of law

Core Values

- ⦿ Promoting Caribbean identity and sovereignty, together with the development and protection of nationhood
- ⦿ Cultivating multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration and involving alumni in this process as experts/guest speakers
- ⦿ Preserving a climate of intellectual freedom
- ⦿ Engendering in students a commitment to personal growth
- ⦿ Fostering ethical values, attitudes and approaches
- ⦿ Encouraging community service and involvement and dedication to development of the region

The Strategic Plan 2012-2017

The Key Attributes of the Distinctive UWI Graduate

Key
Attributes
of the UWI
Graduate

- ❖ critical and creative thinker;
- ❖ effective communicator;
- ❖ IT-skilled; innovative and entrepreneurial; globally aware and well grounded in regional identity; socially, culturally and environmentally responsible; guided by strong ethical values

Developing The Distinctive UWI Graduate????

- ⦿ To what extent are we achieving this goal of the distinctive UWI Graduate?
- ⦿ Can we achieve this goal only through our curricular offerings?
- ⦿ How prepared are our graduates to contribute to national and regional needs?
- ⦿ Is the University producing the kind of engaged citizen or transformational leader that our region and the world requires?

MOVING FROM THEORY TO REALITY- BEST PRACTICE

How have we tried to do this better???

A selection...

- ⦿ Enhanced Academic Advising
- ⦿ The World of Work programme
- ⦿ Support for Students with special needs
- ⦿ Expanding internship opportunities
- ⦿ Expansion of curricula offerings e.g. out of faculty electives, foreign language courses, co-curricular courses,
- ⦿ Development and Enhancement of the Co-curricular course programme
- ⦿ Service Learning and Community Engagement
- ⦿ Expansion and Integration of Student Services – new Division of Student Services and Development.

A UWI BEST PRACTICE

An intervention, process or approach, which

- *has contextual relevance for the University of the West Indies;*
- *is exemplary in its ability to produce superior results when assessed against the goals set and/or against similar practice in the relevant core area;*
- *engages internal and external stakeholders;*
- *is efficient in terms of resources (human, time, financial);*
- *is well documented;*
- *has utility and is recognized beyond the practice site*

(“Survey of the Literature on Global Best Practices in Higher Education: Framework for Analysis of Practices in Higher Education.” UWI; 2012.)

Evaluating Best Practices

Criteria identified to access best practices at the UWI:

- good and easily accessible documentation
- addressed an important institutional/developmental need
- rigorously evaluated
- produced superior results
- efficient in resource use (time, personnel, money)
- exemplary in faculty and staff engagement
- exemplary in student engagement
- mobilized external stakeholders
- utility beyond the practice site
- recognized beyond the practice site

(“Survey of the Literature on Global Best Practices in Higher Education: Framework for Analysis of Practices in Higher Education.” UWI; 2012.)

Students with Special Needs

Students with Special Needs – The Academic Support/Disabilities Liaison Unit (ASDLU)

ASDLU) seeks to provide support to all students ASDLU seeks to be part of an “Early Alert” and prevention system aimed at the early identification of students:

- Who have special needs – physical, mental and learning disabilities
 - Who need academic support
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- ⦿ Academic Support - This is done by providing advice and training in study skills, time-management etc. and over the past two years a peer-tutoring system has been introduced.
 - ⦿ Students with Disabilities - monitors their well-being , providing special supports including assistive technology and examination accommodations. Sign language training for staff , time-tabling of classrooms to facilitate special needs etc.

Students with Special Needs

1. Good and Easily Accessible Documentation

- Student Disability Policy: The Student Disability Policy was presented to the Academic Board and accepted in September 2007.
- Emergency Evacuation and Operation Plan Ref: Disabled Students and Staff
- Faculty Guide for Accommodating Students from the Disabilities Unit
- Marking Dyslexic Students' Work: Good Practice Guideline for Tutor/Examiners
- Students in University Housing (with Special Recommendations for Disabled Students)
- Code of Practice on Provision for Disabled Students, including those with Dyslexia and Mental Health Difficulties.
- Procedures and Guidelines for Examinations for Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties
- Code of Practice of the assurance of Academic Quality and Standards (Students with Disabilities) UWI
- Students Disability Disclosure and Confidentiality Policy: (linked to student disability policy)

Students with Special Needs

2. Addressed an Important institutional/ Developmental Need

- One of the core values outlined in the UWI's Strategic Plan 2012-2017 is accessibility
- Vision and strategy for access, inclusion, guidance and support to all students
- Equal opportunity
- Recognizes the diversity of student population

3. Rigorously Evaluated

- Individual student report on conduct of examinations
- ASDLU along with the other student services underwent a Quality Assurance Review in 2012.

Students with Special Needs

4. Produced Superior Results

- Students complete their academic programmes, some with first class honours and some have continued unto graduate degrees
- One grateful graduate made a personal donation to start a fund for needy students with special needs.

5. Efficient in Resource Use (time, personnel, money)

- The Academic Support Unit has performed well with limited staff. The staff have been able to gain good name recognition, raise funds, gain resources through links with external donors and the use of staff and student volunteers.

Students with Special Needs

6. Exemplary in Faculty and Staff Engagement

- Collaboration with academic and administrative staff and in support of students.
- Liaises with faculties for examinations accommodations provided to students with disabilities
- The Alma Jordan Library has acquired hardware and software to facilitate the provision of services to blind and visually-impaired students.
- The Security Services Unit has willingly provided shuttle services to physically challenged students, whether it is to collect students from the Priority Bus Route, take them home in the vicinity or take them to different destinations in and around campus. This semester (Semester I 2014/2015) this unit experienced an increase in the requests for this type of facility and the Unit continued to assist.

Students with Special Needs

7. Exemplary in Student Engagement

- Since 2011, the Academic Support/Disabilities Liaison Unit has been commemorating the international day of persons with disabilities and has made commendable efforts in sensitizing our campus community about persons with disabilities with an annual disabilities week;
- **A system of staff and student volunteers has been established of interested persons who support the work of ASDLU.**

Students with Special Needs

8. Mobilized External Stakeholders

- ASDLU has also successfully collaborated with the following entities:
 - School for Deaf
 - School for the Blind
 - Skills Training Unit, Ministry of Labor
 - Torres Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago
 - The Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago
 - National Training Board Trinidad and Tobago
 - The Disabilities Unit, University of Wales (U.K)
 - The Blind Welfare Association of Trinidad and Tobago
 - Disabilities Affairs Unit, Ministry of Social Development
 - Scholarship and Advanced Training Division, Ministry of Public Administration
 - Disability Affairs Unit, Ministry of Social Development (Prime Minister's Office)
 - The Scholarship Division of the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Government of Trinidad and Tobago
- Information and advice /Scholarships for some students with disabilities/ Support and recognition

Students with Special Needs



Presentation of Wheelchair by the UWI Guild of Students 2011/2012 to the Staff of ASDLU



Presentation of Digital Voice Recorders by the UWI Alumni Association, T&T Chapter to the Staff of ASDLU

Students with Special Needs

9. Utility beyond the Practice Site

- Graduates are able to operate as independent members of society;
- Increased employability of persons with disabilities including learning disabilities.
- Some are undertaking graduate studies

10. Recognized Beyond the Practice Site

- Numerous students have graduated, some have become leaders in the national movement for persons with disabilities;
- We have begun to get students with disabilities from other parts of the region.
- Graduates have testified to the impact of ASDLU on their academic success.

Co-curricular Programme

Co-curricular Programme

- ⦿ The UWI co-curricular programme allows students to develop a range of important life skills and competencies for success in life and work in the 21st century.
- ⦿ This programme emerged at the UWI in response to student demand for a broader curriculum and the recognition of alternative areas of learning.
- ⦿ In 2009 we began a revitalisation of the COCR programme at UWI St. Augustine.

Co-curricular courses

- Allow for the award of up to three (3) credits and additional certification and can be taken as electives;
- Co-curricular courses are optional but open to all undergraduate students, however many students have no space for electives;
- At St. Augustine courses were developed with credits ranging from 1-3 credits to allow greater flexibility and for students to take more than one course.



Co-curricular Courses: *Developing a Balanced You*

1. Workplace Protocol for Students
2. Minding SPEC: Exploring Sports, Physical education and Health & Wellness
3. Managing my High (mY High): Alcohol, Drugs and Addictive Behaviours
4. Technology Literacy
5. Microsoft office Specialist (MOS) international Certifications
6. Mind the Gap: Towards Psychological Health & Wellness
7. Public Speaking and Voice Training: Towards a More Confident You
8. Living and Learning: Professional Development through Community Service
9. Financial Literacy
10. Ethics and Integrity: Building moral competencies

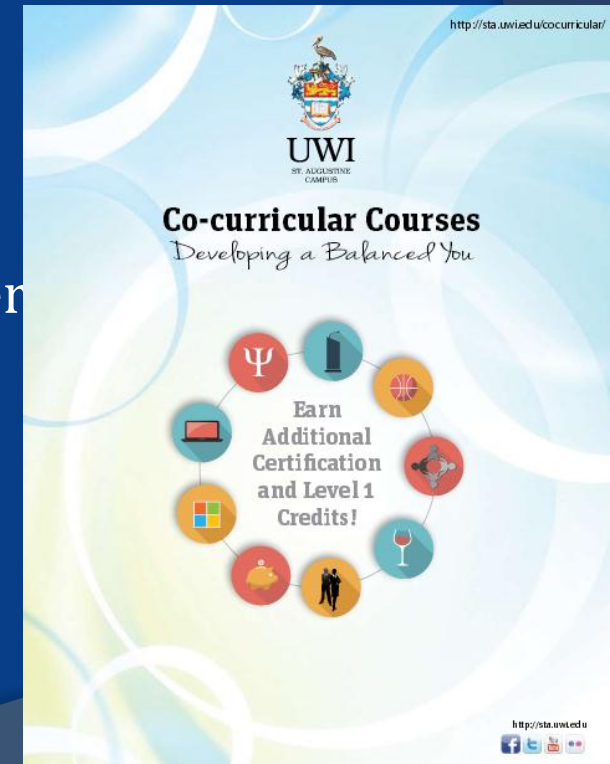
[COCR Video:](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNfcrQCS0mw>

Co-curricular Programme-

1. Good and easily accessible documentation

- A COCR website was developed (www.sta.uwi.edu/cocurricular/).
- A succinct brochure was developed and printed for distribution through a number of channels. Also for distribution electronically.
- Each Faculty booklet contains a section outlining the courses offered through the co-curricular programme.



Co-curricular Programme

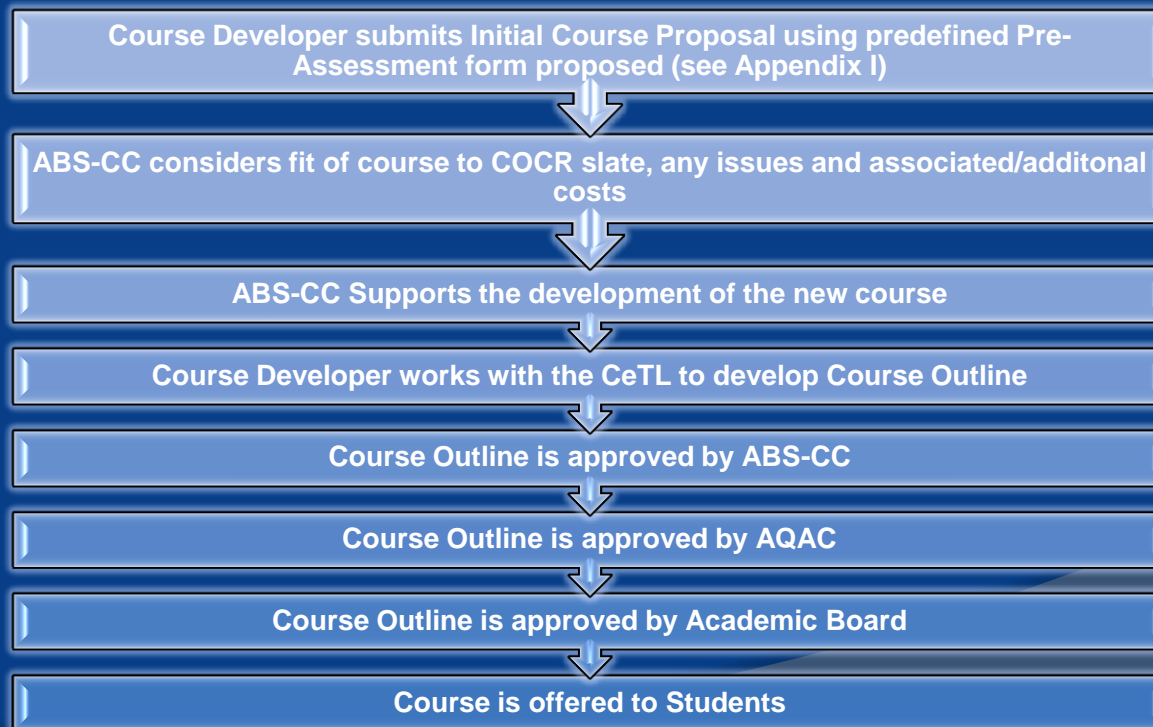
2. Addresses an important institutional/ developmental need

- The University's aim is to produce well-rounded graduates who are better prepared for their role in society and in the workplace.
- Co-curricular activities are designed to complement the core curricula in a critical range of skills essential to creating well-rounded students who are better prepared for the life generally and the world of work.
- Up to three COCR credits can be substituted for three level one credits as a part of a student's degree structure. However, if a student's degree structure does not allow for this type of substitution, completed COCR courses will appear on their final transcript as recognition for additional skills gained during their formal degree.

Co-curricular Programme

3. Rigorously evaluated

- Administrative Approval Process



Rigorous Evaluation Process

Student Evaluations

- A special version of the **Student Evaluation of Courses and Lecturers** was developed for COCR courses
- The Co-curricular Survey - aimed to obtain information on student levels of awareness of the programme and its benefits; their level of interest in the courses offered; their opinions of the COCR courses they may have participated in; and suggestions to better meet needs of student

4. Produced superior results

Survey Feedback-

- *“I did all the Microsoft 2010 courses and I am currently doing the workplace protocol for students and I thoroughly enjoyed all. I learnt and am still learning many things and all these courses have wonderful lecturers. Hope they all keep up the good work and I would proudly recommend these co-curricular courses to my friends.”*

Student Evaluation Feedback...

COCR 1034- Public Speaking and Voice Training: Towards a More Confident You

- *I liked the fact the course forced you to come out of your comfort zone. It helped me become more confident in myself and my abilities.*
- *The course delivered. It made me feel more confident when doing presentations and the lecturer presented advice that I know I will be unable to forget. He makes it look so easy.*
- *Very interactive and provided an avenue for growth in general*
- *Stimulated my creativity and provided a means through which I could gain self confidence*

Co-curricular Programme

5. Efficient in Resource Use (time, personnel, money)

- Co-curricular Coordinator appointed part-time with additional duties and support staff;
- This staff member performed in an exemplary way and is responsible for much of the success of this programme;
- A temporary staff member was recently appointed
- Progress in expanding numbers and offering new courses is inhibited by the lack of clear budgetary allocations for the COCR Programme.

Co-curricular Programme

6. Exemplary in Faculty and Staff Engagement

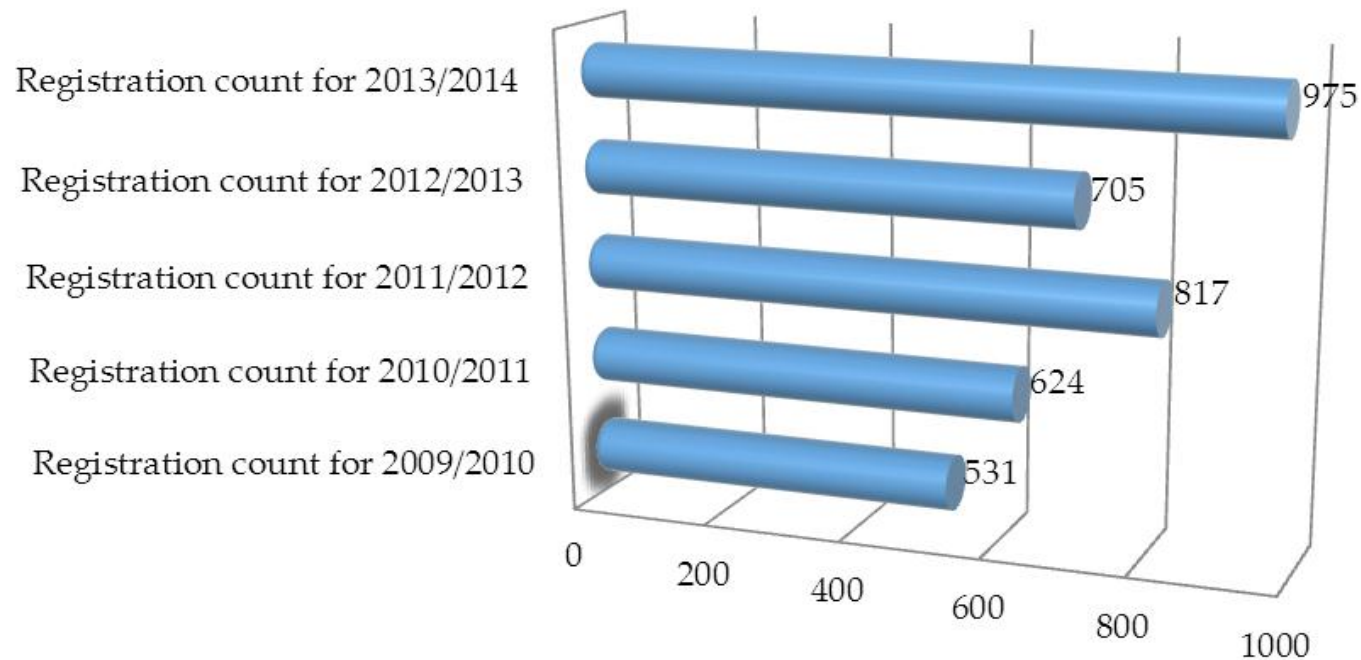
- Faculty co-curricular coordinators - Academic staff within each department with the responsibility of promoting and monitoring the co-curricular programme, course approvals and providing the direct link with the Programme Coordinator
- Courses could be faculty based or based in the Student Services

7. Exemplary in Student Engagement

- Increased participation rates
- Increased awareness
- Expressions of interest among graduate students to pursue such courses.

Co-curricular Programme

Total Enrollment Over the Last 5 Years



COCR Programme Expanded Reach

**SEMESTER 1-2013/2014-
100% INCREASE IN
PARTICIPATION**

**SEMESTER 2- 2013/2014- 87.8
% INCREASE IN
PARTICIPATION**

Co-curricular Programme

8. Mobilized External Stakeholders

- identified external stakeholder willing to fund a course in defensive driving for 3 years but withdrew because of internal challenges
- Recently gave presentation to another potential funder who expressed interest.

9. Utility Beyond the Practice Site

- Contributing to the key attributes of the distinctive UWI graduate
- Provides skills useful in the workplace and in managing life more effectively.

10. Recognized Beyond the Practice Site

- Certificates of Completion awarded
- Listed on transcript

Service Learning and Community Engagement

Service Learning and Community Engagement

- ⦿ Community Engagement involves students and staff in practical work in the community outside the university in various activities.
- ⦿ It can take place in collaboration with non-governmental and community based organisations, government agencies, private organisations.
- ⦿ Examples include – school outreach, environmental projects; community infrastructure projects etc.

Service Learning

- ① Service-learning refers to learning through service that is integrated into the core curriculum and for which students gain credits.
- ① SL can also be an avenue for students to gain practical work experience in their field of instruction;
- ① But among its important impacts is to provide young people with an increased sense of civic responsibility and wider social and community experience.

Emphasizing three types of Community Engagement

- ⦿ *Service Learning*
- ⦿ *Community Service*
- ⦿ *Internships and Practicums*

The Caribbean Internship Programmes – an example

Final year students and recent graduates on the three physical UWI campuses, primarily in the areas of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work are supporting Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations in the Caribbean region through the Caribbean Internship Project.

The project involves the collaboration of the three of four campuses of the University of the West Indies, in the assignment of interns to the social service agencies in the Caribbean.

With support this could be expanded to involve more students on the St. Augustine Campus to include other faculties and departments

Community Service

- ⦿ Voluntary service given by students supported by staff or external mentor
- ⦿ Aim to rekindle the spirit of giving with no expectation of reward
- ⦿ Also developing skills of discipline and commitment to a societal improvement.

SHALIMAR –UWI MOTIVATED MENTORS OUTREACH NETWORK (SUMMON)



This field trip took the girls from Caratal R.C. Primary School to visit the UWI St. Augustine Campus. As well as preparing them for their Secondary Examinations, the UWI sisters of the (SUMMON) group also gave these girls who never ventured very far from their communities the opportunity to envision an academic future.

Service Learning and Community Engagement

1. Good and Easily Accessible Documentation

- Proposal for introduction for community engagement on campus discussed and approved in principle.
- Environmental scan conducted to document community engagement programmes in faculties

2. Addressed an important institutional/developmental need

- A structured and organized programme of CE is one way of developing a graduate culture of social and civic responsibility.
- Provides practical work experience through service
- Value for discipline beyond personal enrichment and career advancement
- Critical to the mission of Tertiary level institutions worldwide .
- Is one way of fulfilling UWI's responsibility to the public and the communities close to and far from the campus
- Students have expressed the need for activities that promote their holistic development.

Service-Learning and Community Engagement (CE)

3. Rigorously evaluated

- Still at an early stage but templates have been developed for MOUs with institutions, contracts of engagement for students and evaluation of students by institutions to ensure that students remain committed.

4. Produced Superior Results

- Still in its early stages, but in the Dept of Electrical and Computer engineering where SL is best developed students have described it as their best learning experience.

5. Efficient in Resource Use (time, personnel, money)

- Staff limitations have affected progress
- In C&EE Dept a full-time staff member supports this programme
- Career, Curricular and Community Engagement Unit to be part of the new Division of Student Services and Development.



Student participants from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering – Community Service Learning Course Work Project

Service Learning and Community Engagement

6. Exemplary in Faculty and Staff Engagement

- Survey “Are You Engaged” identified strong staff interest in such activities
- CE Advisory Committee established with faculty representation

7. Exemplary in Student Engagement

- Annual Community Service Fair organised;
- Building student engagement for a sustained period a challenge

8. Mobilized External Stakeholders

- The CE Advisory committee includes external stakeholders
- External stakeholders must be mobilized for these activities
External expertise being sourced to support further development

Arunodai Presbyterian Church



Recognizes the

**Year 2
Electrical Engineering Students,
U.W.I. St. Augustine**

With thanks and appreciation
for their
invaluable contribution to
'Community Outreach Project, 2009'

Dated this 7th day of June 2009.

**Dept. of Electrical and
Computer Engineering
Plaque received from the
Arunodai Presbyterian
Church – June 2009.**

List of Current Community Service Organizations/ Programmes

1. Rotaract St. Augustine
2. Animal Welfare Network
3. ALTA –Adult Literacy Tutors Association
4. Caribbean Youth Environmental Network
5. Down Syndrome Family Network
6. Habitat for Humanity Trinidad and Tobago and Campus Chapter
7. SUMMON Mentorship Programme (Young Women)
8. Cyril Ross Tutors for Tots
9. Good Start Mentorship Programme (Young Men)
10. Nature Seekers

Service Learning and Community Engagement

9. Utility Beyond Site

- Gains practical experience,
- Learns social responsibility
- Builds partnership with communities

10. Recognized beyond the practice site

- Working towards inclusion of completed Community Service listed on student transcripts.

WHAT IS MISSING?

**Integrated Division of Student
Services and Development**

Division of Student Services and Student Development

The initiatives mentioned above will from August 1 become integrated into the new division.

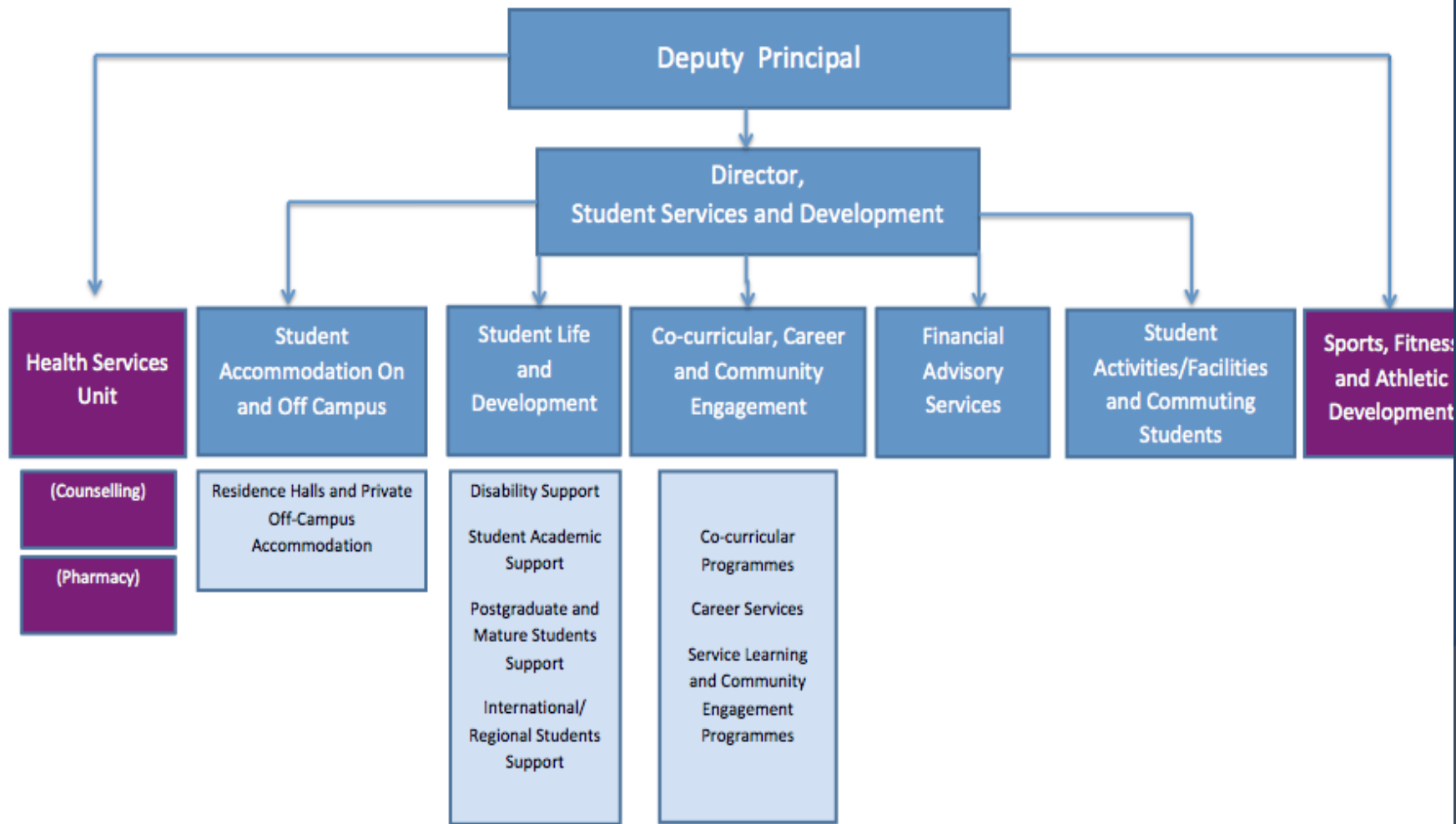
We see this as a parallel pillar of the total university experience of all students

THE DIVISION OF STUDENT SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT



1. Enhanced support to all students
2. New focus on mature and postgraduate students, as well as international and regional students
3. An accommodations office to coordinate off-campus and on-campus student accommodation
4. A new Financial Advisory Unit
5. Expand co-curricular and community engagement programmes
6. Implement policies and programmes to support student athletes
7. Strengthen support to off-campus and commuting students

PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DIVISION OF STUDENT SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT AND REQUIRED RESOURCES.



Student Development

- ⦿ This approach recognizes the important role of universities in student development ;
- ⦿ This is in keeping with the theme of the current strategic plan – Teaching, Learning *and* Student Development;
- ⦿ So in addition to providing enhanced student services the new DSSD will collaborate with faculties in the overall development of students;

We are still at the beginning stages but we hope that at the end this too will become a UWI Best Practice.

THANK YOU