

Graduates claim discrimination at dentistry school

BY CAMILLE HUNTE

camille.hunte@trinidadexpress.com

TWO graduates of the dentistry programme at The University of the West Indies (The UWI) Mona campus in Jamaica are calling for Government intervention to treat with what they say is discrimination by officials at The UWI St Augustine School of Dentistry.

Dr Rossina Richards and Dr Roger Sayers are alleging that the school has sidelined graduates from the Mona campus in favour of graduates from the St Augustine campus with respect to its dentistry internship programme.

The two, who are nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, told the *Sunday Express* in an interview at Express House in Port of Spain they were being treated unfairly by the school.

Richards, who is currently enrolled in the one-year internship programme at The UWI St Augustine School of Dentistry said she was only accepted after months of pleading and com-

plaining to the school.

Even after being accepted, she said the school refused to pay her a monthly stipend which all other students in the programme are receiving.

She said she needed the stipend to meet her expenses as the full time programme makes it impossible to seek employment elsewhere.

Not accepted for space

Sayers, however, applied but was not accepted to the internship programme.

He said he was told this was due to a lack of space.

He said he was further told that it was not necessary for him to complete the internship programme to be registered with the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

However, he said the programme provides valuable practical experience.

In e-mailed responses to his queries, acting director of the School of Dentistry Dr William Smith said the school simply did

not have the physical space to accommodate additional candidates.

He said accepting a candidate into a programme that does not have space would be unethical.

Sayers was advised to reapply in June.

He said as a Trinidad and Tobago national, he could not understand why he has not been accepted into the programme, when foreign nationals who studied at the St Augustine campus were being accepted.

Richards and Sayers are contemplating legal action against the school.

Richards' attorney Janet Peters has already written to the University indicating that legal action will be taken should Richards' not be paid a stipend.

The stipend is approximately \$6,000 per month.

Several efforts by the *Sunday Express* to contact officials at the school of dentistry for comment were unsuccessful.

Calls were not returned and e-mails were neither answered nor acknowledged.



CONTEMPLATING LEGAL ACTION: Graduates of The UWI, Mona, Jamaica, Dr Rossina Richards and Dr Roger Sayers during an interview at Express House, Port of Spain, earlier this month. —Photo: ROBERT TAYLOR