



## Michael Mansoor

*Michael Mansoor is a man whose native intelligence has been guided by two exceptional women and a few good men in his inexorable path to greatness. Born in Barataria, not far from squalor, he was soon to emerge as an intellectual heavyweight with a keen eye for a good investment.*

*Take for example, when confronted with a battalion of the nation's brightest boys at the then Mecca of secondary education, St Mary's College, he deliberately chose to avoid the hothouse of the sciences to pursue the calmer but arguably more distinguished terrain of the languages.*

*This choice avoided competition with the Keith Aleonges and other Einsteinian boys surrounding him and created space for himself – a small acorn to grow into a mighty oak. In so doing, he copped the much-coveted national scholarship in languages having read French, Spanish, Latin and Greek.*

*In another astute but apparent knight's move, and after all the hard work of learning four foreign languages, he accepted a scholarship to pursue, of all things, accounting and business under the auspices of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario and the University of Western Ontario.*

*Needless to say, the rest is history or more precisely, economics.*

*Chancellor, Michael is a Titan in his field. He performed the Herculean task of merging two competing financial interests in the Caribbean: Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and Barclays. Out of this magnificent fusion arose the 3,500-person strong, CIBC First Caribbean International Bank, now the region's largest financial services institution and one whose future he has forged with his own deft hands.*

*The merger of two financial institutions across 15 countries in the Caribbean tested his aptitude for diplomacy as much as his financial or organisational skills. As he approached Governments, Labour Unions and Regulatory Bodies in the financial capitals of the region, he learnt first-hand the limitations and boundaries of Caribbean unity and CARICOM; when the narrow economic interest of one or the other island state appeared to be threatened. In the end, the merger survived and some of the lessons of this historic Caribbean development are explored in a series of business cases that are being studied both at UWJ and elsewhere.*

*Michael Mansoor is immediate past chairman of the Council of the St Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies. It was during his chairmanship of Campus Council that we saw the introduction of quality circles in our educational processes. His insistence on quality was no doubt a repayment on a loan of mentorship through the likes of Fathers Pedro Valdez and Leonard Graff. He has repaid that loan handsomely and with much interest and is now himself a mentor to many.*

*He is a former partner at Ernst and Young, Trinidad and Tobago, and was the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1990 he joined the historically troubled McEneaney Alstons Group of Companies at a critical time in its transformation to the financial powerhouse that is today the renamed ANSA McAL Group. As its Finance Director and the Group Managing Director Mr Mansoor was an important contributor to the restoration and consolidation of one of the country's important institutions. Today, he is the Chairman*

*of the Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence – an organisation which he co-founded under the watchful eyes of Sir Ellis Clarke and Dr Anthony Sabga.*

*Mansoor served in the Upper House as an independent senator between 1987-1995, a period when Trinidad and Tobago was in the straitjacket of IMF conditionalities and prescriptions. Those were challenging times and his contributions to the annual budget debates remain relevant and important lessons in fiscal management even today. He added his voice to that of the business community in calling for the introduction of VAT and when the legislation was brought to the Senate, true to his humble beginnings, he introduced amendments to zero-rate basic commodities like bread – a development that brought him high praise from the grassroots Bakers Association of the day.*

*The quality of his brilliance has not diminished and indeed he has been twice blessed. Blessed to have been born of a special woman; one with a firm hand, keen determination and a far sighted view of the world. Blessed also to have found Maureen, his childhood sweetheart and soulmate for it is she who has provided the stability to steer him steadily through life's oft challenging mains.*

*Chancellor, Michael Mansoor has deservedly risen to high prominence in our society. I invite you to receive him, a Titan and a polymath and by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of The University of the West Indies, confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.*

*St. Augustine Campus  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2012*