

EMANCIPATION PROCESSION

Participants walk along Piccadilly Street, Port-of-Spain during the Emancipation Day procession to the Queen's Park Savannah, Port-of-Spain, yesterday.
PHOTO: EDISON BOODOSINGH



No change in entry policy

Value of reaching "under-served" missed, **UWI** principal

GEISHA ALONZO

The University of the West Indies' St Augustine principal Brian Copeland says the campus has taken no decision to lower the entry requirements for the Faculty of Social Sciences due to any drastic drop in the number of applicants. In giving this assurance yesterday, Copeland also sought to clear the air on how applicants to any programme are assessed.

Last week, when questioned on the issue after it was raised in the media, Education Minister Anthony Garcia had said the prerequisites for entry were lowered for only the certificate programmes offered at The **UWI's** Faculty of Social Sciences. A Prior Learning Assessment Requirement (PLRA), he said, would also be done for applicants.

In a statement yesterday, Copeland admitted that in the case of Social Sciences, the number of applications to "a few programmes has declined," pushing the modal score in the pool for selection of appli-

cants closer to the lower level matriculation requirements.

However, he said "in all educational programmes, whether academic or vocational, a range of skill sets or competencies are measured against well-established competency levels that range from basic knowledge and understanding to the higher order cognitive levels associated with the ability to analyse, create, and synthesise solutions to problems."

He said unfortunately, public discourse this week has focused only on entry qualifications as an indicator of programme quality, rather than on the "mechanisms" that academic institutions put in place for students who, upon entry, could build upon their knowledge and skills to achieve the output standards.

Copeland said the lower level, formal, academic entry requirement into a programme at **UWI** is five CSEC passes, inclusive of English and Mathematics, but added that for close to 20 years, the university-wide matriculation requirements always allowed for three CSEC passes, plus relevant

experience for mature students, defined by the university as 21 and older.

"It would be appreciated that the entry statistics for applicants into a programme will vary each year as it is dependent upon the academic profile of the pool of applicants, and the number of spaces available within a programme of study in a given year. Over the years, however, the competitive environment has pushed the selection criteria way above the minimum requirements in most programmes," Copeland said in the statement.

He said it was also important to note that the institution, in particular its Open Campus, has recognised the need to extend its reach to the "under-served" and also the value of prior learning.

The **UWI**, Copeland said, has "frontally" engaged discourse on how this continuous learning for adults can be matched against educational goals, or a programme of study.

"In the case of Social Sciences, the number of applications to a few programmes has declined, pushing the modal score

in the pool for selection of applicants closer to the lower level matriculation requirements. Here, other tools are used for assessment as listed above, a critical one being prior learning assessment for mature students," he said.

"The Certificate Programme in Public Administration, which was widely discussed, was one such programme with declining numbers. In order to broaden the catchment, the Faculty is expanding its focus to mature (as defined by **UWI**) individuals with a minimum academic requirement of three CSECs, together with prior learning and work experience or equivalent to gain entry into the programme."

Copeland said in the not too distant future the public would see more efforts by the university to broaden access so as to enrich its student body with individuals who, regardless of their prior academic achievements, demonstrate the potential to succeed. But this, he said, would require going beyond the traditional formal academic qualification which **UWI**

studies have, "time and again, shown to be not a reliable predictor of academic success at the degree level."

"No doubt, these initiatives, as do all paradigm shifts, will be opposed by those who are well entrenched in the status quo, particularly in a society that places formal certification on a very high pedestal," Copeland added.

PRAYER TO ST JUDE

May the Sacred heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Our Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us, St Jude worker of miracles pray for us. Saint Jude helper of the hopeless pray for us. Say this prayer 9 times a day for 9 days. By the eighth day your prayer will be answered. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you St Jude for favors granted.

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