

UWI head explains entry changes

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BRIAN COPELAND, principal of The University of the West Indies (The UWI), stated yesterday the number of applications to a few programmes in the Faculty of Social Sciences has declined, which caused the university to lower its matriculation requirements.

In a statement to the media, Copeland explained how applicants to any programme are assessed within The UWI.

"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," he stated.

Copeland stated other tools are used for assessment, a critical one being prior learning assessment for mature students.

"The certificate programme in public ad-

ministration, 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 The 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," he stated.

Broader access to tertiary education

"In the not-too-distant future, the public will see more efforts by The UWI to broaden access so as to enrich its student body with individuals who, regardless of their prior academic achievements, demonstrate the potential to succeed," he added.

The principal stated this will require going beyond the traditional formal academic qualification which The 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," he stated.

Copeland stated the lower level, formal, academic entry requirement into a programme at The UWI is five CSEC passes, inclusive of English and mathematics.

"However, 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 persons 21 years and older," he stated.

"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 appli-

cants, 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," he stated.

Copeland stated The UWI intends to play its role in the development of a new seamless national and regional education system that, among other things, allows citizens to easily move to any level of educational achievement regardless of their current standing.

"In my inaugural address, I challenged the region to target a future state in which, inter alia, man-made disasters are but few and in the aftermath of natural disasters, survivors would be able to rebuild and maintain resilient communities that can grow to re-establish strong societies.

"The forging of a seamless education system is a necessary precursor to this target state," Copeland stated.