

The Evolution of the Belizean University

Eve Aird

Introduction

The evolution of the Belizean university can be traced over a twenty-three year period beginning in 1977 with the establishment of the Committee for Sixth Form Studies in response to emerging concerns regarding the relevance of existing tertiary education, and ending in the year 2000 with a second attempt to coordinate and rationalize Belizean higher or tertiary education. During this time, the evolution of the Belizean university went through three distinct stages that resulted in the establishment of three distinct institutions: the Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST), the University College of Belize (UCB), and the University of Belize (UB). This evolutionary period in Belizean higher education is marked by social and political forces and changes affecting the country. This paper, drawn from a doctoral dissertation tracing the origins and evolution of Belizean higher education between 1930-1994, critically examines the development of the Belizean university through its three stages.. It examines the development and nature of each of the three stages, offers some possible explanations for their development, and in the case of BELCAST, for its dissolution.

The Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST)

In 1977, there was the general recognition that higher education in Belize was not serving the developmental needs of the country (Aird, 2001). Existing tertiary level educational programs were not directly responsive to the human resource developmental needs of the country. None of the existing institutions were able to provide training in areas such as the applied sciences (including health care), technology (in a variety of fields such as agriculture, fisheries and telecommunications), teacher training and management. The limited resources (both human and capital) available at this time were fragmented among the five existing tertiary institutions. Existing tertiary level programs, especially those at the sixth forms, catered to British examinations that excluded relevant Belizean content, and failed to define a Belizean consciousness and identity. There was little scholarly dialogue and research on important issues affecting the country's progress and development. In the words of Said Musa, then Minister of Education, an important pre-requisite for an independent Belize was its ability to produce its own professionals and para-professionals at a high level of training (Aird, 2001, p. 101).

In response, the Ministry of Education in 1977 commissioned a group that became known as the Committee for Sixth Form Studies to evaluate existing tertiary education, and to make recommendations for the collaboration and consolidation of education at this level, in the planning, development and distribution of programs and courses among schools (BELCAST Planning and Coordinating Committee, 1982). The Committee was also charged to develop an institution that would meet some of the more important developmental needs. The membership of the Committee was especially qualified to perform this task of evaluating and redefining Belizean tertiary education for it was composed of the then Dean of the Jesuit owned and operated St. John's College Sixth Form, the then Resident Tutor of the UWI Extra Mural Department, a former Chief Education Officer, and a high school principal, all of whom were experienced Belizean educators.

At a June 10th, 1977 meeting of the Committee for Sixth Form Studies, it was decided that the Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST) would be developed. It was officially opened in September 1979 with an enrolment of 13 students in three third year level programs. Bennett (1990) described BELCAST's early life as being "more of a concept than an institution." That is, it had no office, faculty building and faculty of its own. Rather, it "borrowed" an office from the Bliss Institute, and held classes at St. Johns College Sixth Form, the Belize Technical College and the Belize Teachers College. Part-time faculty were drawn from the community as needed. The administration consisted of a Registrar and a secretary. The BELCAST Planning and Coordinating Committee which grew out of the Committee for Sixth Form Studies served as its governing board, guiding the development of the institution and setting policy, until its Act was passed on August 27th, 1983, and the BELCAST Council was appointed according to the terms of the Act.

In fact, BELCAST was initially conceived and developed as a consortium of three existing colleges which were termed its constituent colleges: the Belize Technical College, the Belize Teachers' College and St. Johns' College Sixth Form. Together, these institutions or constituent colleges would work with BELCAST for an integrated development of relevant higher education in Belize. Within this concept, Belizean higher education consisted of

what has become known as a "2 + 1 concept." That is, BELCAST developed and delivered third year programs, building on the two-year foundation of the constituent colleges (Advanced Level and Associate Degree programs). Programs in Telecommunications, Secondary Education and Meteorology were offered utilizing the resources of the constituent colleges.

The Reorganization and Expansion of BELCAST

Two years after its establishment, in 1981, in response to the evolving manpower needs, BELCAST initiated an expansion program. It began offering three-year post-secondary programs in applied Bio-Sciences (Fisheries Technology, Pharmacology, Veterinary Technology, and Medical Technology.) The intention of these programs was to train graduates for immediate employment as opposed to the pure science concentrations of the Advanced Level courses. In 1982, because of internal management problems at the Belize Teacher's College, it was asked to assume responsibility for the administration of that institution. Its offices were moved to that campus, and the college, absorbed by BELCAST, became known as the School of Education, and a Dean was appointed to supervise the development and delivery of the education programs.. A three year Secondary Teacher Education Certificate was added to BELCAST's menu. That same year BELCAST began collaborating with the Belize School of Nursing to offer a three-year professional nursing program (BELCAST Planning and Coordinating Committee, 1982). Later, a three year certificate in Business Management was added.

The 1981 decision to develop three-year post-secondary education programs, the 1982 incorporation of the Belize Teachers College with the accompanying transfer of administrative offices to those at the BTTC, and the collaboration with the Bliss School of Nursing to develop a three-year professional nursing program were actually the first steps in what the Committee for BELCAST Development Plans (a subcommittee of the BELCAST Planning and Coordinating Committee) called the reorganization and expansion of BELCAST. The initial concept of the consortium of several institutions evolved to that of a BELCAST as a single multi-disciplinary institution consisting of several faculties, spanning perceived developmental sectors within the society.

It was decided that BELCAST as a consortium could not meet its mission of developing relevant tertiary education, for the same reasons that necessitated the development of the institution in the first place: they were unable to diversify their programs, to make the curricular adjustments necessary to meet the demands for tertiary education in the new and specialized areas such as the Allied Health programs. The new programs placed additional stress on their already limited resources. BELCAST as a consortium of collaborating colleges represented a continued fragmentation of tertiary education and an inefficient use of limited resources (Aird, p. 111). Developing the capabilities of these institutions was considered to be "contributing to an already unwieldy system characterized by duplication and competition for limited resources" (The HEDCO Study Team, 1983). Furthermore, while the constituent colleges did collaborate with BELCAST, the physical distance between the campuses, the difference between the administration of the constituent colleges and BELCAST, especially as they related to academic affairs and business affairs, compromised the extent and success of the collaboration, as BELCAST attempted to meet demands for new programs (Aird, p. 112).

Lastly, the hiatus existing between the first two years of post-secondary education offered solely at the sixth forms and the Belize Teachers' College and the third year offered at BELCAST compromised the nature and quality of BELCAST programs (Committee for BELCAST Development Plans, 1982). BELCAST programs had to be built on the foundation of programming developed and delivered at the lower level of the 2+1 system. Programs at the first level were developed to train primary school teachers, prepare students to sit British examinations in the Arts and Sciences as well as in the engineering and building technology fields, and meet the requirements of the Associates Degree in the various programs offered. While the constituent institutions did cooperate with BELCAST in the planning and delivery of programs, they could not compromise the integrity of their own programs. This would continue to define the kinds of programs offered at the "university" level of tertiary education in the years to come (Aird, p. 112).

The decision, then, to reorganize and expand the Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST) was influenced by the need to create a tertiary level system that would respond to the development needs of the country.

In its February 15, 1982 "Proposal for the Reorganization and Expansion of the Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST) and the Establishment of the Central Campus in Belmopan" submitted to the Ministry to Education (and later to the European Development Fund through the European Economic Community) the Committee for BELCAST Development Plans described the BELCAST project as having three components. The first was the actual synthesis of all existing post-secondary institutions into a single multi-disciplinary institution and the establishment of extra-mural or outreach centers in the five district towns. This included developing the

academic structure and governance of the institution as well as designing the nature and levels of programming and certification. The second component addressed the need for a faculty development program designed to meet the immediate and projected human resource needs of BELCAST. The last described the design and development of the central campus in Belmopan and the centers around the country. Funding in the amount of BZ \$ 2TM (or US \$6 M) for the "Proposal for the Reorganization and Expansion of the Belize College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (BELCAST)" was granted by the European Economic Community (EEC) through the European Development Fund (EDF). The Higher Education Development Cooperation (HEDCO), contracted by the EDF to conduct a feasibility study on the potential of the BELCAST project to provide relevant, quality higher education for Belize, affirmed that the proposed reorganization and expansion of BELCAST would provided skilled professional and para-professional workers (including teachers) in both the public and private sector, and would have the capacity to respond to evolving human resource needs in the developing society (HEDCO Study Team, 1982, p. 32).

The BELCAST project was never realized.

The Dismantling of BELCAST and the Establishment of the University College of Belize (UCB)

In June 1985, shortly after the 1984 victory of the United Democratic Party at the polls, the newly elected Minister of Education unveiled his policy on tertiary education. The policy included the modification of the BELCAST Act, the restructuring of the institution and the creation of a liberal arts university (*The New Belize*, June 1985). The Minister contended that the BELCAST Act challenged the traditional Church-state relationship in education and allowed BELCAST to be the only post-secondary institution of higher education in the country. Furthermore, under the mantle of BELCAST, the quality of teacher training had deteriorated. At the time, the Minister announced that the BZ\$12M grant from the European Economic Community (EEC) through the European Development Fund (EDF) for the expansion and construction of the campus in Belmopan was reassigned to the construction of a new public hospital in Belize City. On February 24, 1986, it was announced at a meeting of the National Council on Education that BELCAST would be closed (*The Belize Times*, March 5, 1986). No discussion had been held with the Council, President and faculty before the announcement was made. No attempt to modify the Act or restructure the institution had been made. One is left with the impression that the decision to close the institution was a unilateral one made by the Minister at the onset of his ministry (Aird, 2001).

While the BELCAST Act did require the Council to "recognize the cultural and religious basis of the educational system in Belize and to have regard for these in the operation and development of the College" (BECLAST Act, Section 2a), and while both Church and State was represented on the BELCAST Council, there was some ambiguity in the Act that could have been interpreted as giving BELCAST and the Ministry of Education full authority over the development of post-secondary education, including the right to affiliate other institutions as determined by the Minister (Aird, pp. 146-148). On the other hand, given the tremendous amount of time, money and energy that had already been invested in the development of BELCAST, it seems that a modification of the Act and restructuring of BELCAST would have been more appropriate rather than the closure of the institution (Aird, p. 148).

Several other reasons help to explain the closure of BELCAST. These include the nature of party political behavior in Belize in which the government of the United Democratic Party (UDP) may have felt compelled to negate or cancel the projects of the previous government led by the People's United Party (PUP) and to prove that the party is better equipped to lead the nation (Aird, pp. 148-160). Another compelling reason is a dependency syndrome described by Murphy (1990) who compared Belize to "a ten year old child who craves its freedom but still subtly and not so subtly continues to cling to its parent for safety and legitimacy. Belize has a lingering desire for the nest, for safety, for security" (*SPEARReports*, 8, p. 32). This dependency is shown in an apparent unwillingness, or fear, or inability on the part of Belize (as represented by its elected leaders) to take responsibility for its future, and thus the derailing of BELCAST, a vehicle of psychological independence, and the eventual transfer of psychological dependency to the USA, as represented in the successor institution, the University College of Belize under the authority of Ferris State University. Other reasons for the closure of BELCAST include a perception that BELCAST was a communist facility, and threatened the institutional integrity and autonomy on the part of the affiliating colleges (Aird, p. 158).

Perhaps the most compelling reason, however, is the relative inexperience of the Minister of Education and his ill-preparedness to make policy decisions on the development of Belizean higher education and to assume the leadership of the campaign for psychological independence.

The overwhelming impression one gets is that the decision to close BELCAST was an impetuous one which, by his own testimony, was not supported at the Cabinet level (Aird, p. 160), though the government of the United Democratic Party, accepted corporate responsibility by not reversing the decision. Admittedly, the Minister stood alone behind the closed doors of the Cabinet (Aird, p.160). Having made the decision to close the institution and having announced it publicly, he used the nature of the institution, the ambiguities in the Act, and the internal tensions of St. John's College and the Belize Teachers College to justify his actions.

The University College of Belize (UCB)

In July 1986, the Ministry of Education established the University College of Belize (UCB) under the direct supervision of Ferris State University (FSU) of Big Rapids, Michigan. (Ironically, UCB operated out of borrowed facilities at the Belize Teachers' College for three years, and its Act was a near replica of the BELCAST Ordinance.) The establishment of UCB was the end point on an uncertain journey begun when the Minister of Education decided to repeal the BELCAST Act (not effected until May 1988 when the Act establishing the University College of Belize was passed in the National Assembly). Along the way, between May 1986 and July 1986 the institution replacing BELCAST went through several mutations, so much so that it is uncertain whether there any actual thought was given to a Belizean post-BELCAST tertiary education (Aird, pp. 164-168).

It is unclear how Ferris State University of Grand Rapids, Michigan, became the parent or guiding institution. What is known is that Ferris State University had a twenty-year history dating back to 1966 when Belize formally established a "partners" relationship with the state of Michigan, as part of Partners for the Americas, and Belize had been targeted Belize as one of the countries to assist through education. The then President of FSU had visited Belize, and as a result of that visit, Belizean students had been given out-of-state tuition waivers to FSU and other Michigan universities. Furthermore, FSU, in 1985 had been given a USAID contract to train primary and secondary school principals and teachers over a 6 week summer session. Despite this, there are no official records to indicate how FSU was selected. Certainly, there are several other more well-known universities (such as the UWI) that had well-established, mutually beneficial relationships with BELCAST, and the Ministry of Education and other tertiary institutions. There is no evidence to indicate that other universities were considered or approached.

Interviews with key participants involved in the establishment of the University College of Belize (UCB), including the Minister of Education, indicate that no fundamental search for a parent university took place, nor was there any process of evaluation to ensure that the selected university fit the needs of Belize. Moreover, the Minister could not recall exactly how he selected Ferris State University as the institution to spearhead the national university of Belize:

Ferris had a relationship with Belize, but I am not sure what it was. Believe - I seem to remember a man called Bill Todd approaching me and saying he was a representative of Ferris, and heard of my dilemma. Ferris was prepared to help. But I cannot say who Bill Todd actually was at Ferris, and how he came to be in Belize (Quoted in Aird, p. 172).

A representative of Ferris State University (FSU) was fortuitously visiting Belize at the time of the pending BELCAST closure, working on the principals' program and trying to establish other partnerships for FSU at the time of the BELCAST controversy. A former Chief Education Officer recalled that the FSU representative walked into the Minister's office and said that he heard the Minister needed a university, and he had one to offer. The former President of BELCAST also recalled his presence in Belize since he had also visited BELCAST to explore possibilities of a USAID institutional linkage between FSU and BELCAST. At the time, USAID was inviting tenders for a US-based partner to provide the technical assistance to the Belize Institute of Management (BIM) in developing private sector managerial programs. The FSU representative had also been holding discussions with BIM as well as with SJC Sixth Form (Aird, p. 172). On its part, Ferris State College was interested in providing international opportunities for its students and faculty in an English-speaking environment where travel-costs were not prohibitive (Bolland, 1990, p. 71).

The Minister was in the midst of a major political controversy of tremendous proportions as a result of the decision to close BELCAST, and replace it with a national university. According to him, the Cabinet of UDP elected Ministers did not support him, and he was opposed in the public as well. In his words, he was "taking a lot of heat" (Aird, p. 172). BELCAST and its successor institution was a political problem and he needed a quick solution to the problem. The FSU offer to supervise the development of the proposed national university was the ready solution that he needed. It presented a way out of his "dilemma". The offer was accepted, and the FSU-UCB Affiliation Agreement of July 26, 1986 was the result. The University College of Belize was formally opened in September of that same year, two months after the agreement was signed, and four months after BELCAST was closed.

It was expected that through the relationship with Ferris State University, UCB would benefit by the accreditation granted to FSU by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. Furthermore, the Ministry expected that there might be a dearth of qualified instructors to deliver courses within the various programs at a level consistent with the high standards of FSU. FSU professors could fill the vacuum and supplement local lecturers.

A July 1986 International Affiliation Agreement between the Government of Belize and FSU and a subsequent one two years later between the University College of Belize and FSU placed both Belize and its university in a subordinate, dependent position to the Ferris State University. By the terms of the agreement, the FSU Board of Control committed the institution to help Belize establish its national university with a guarantee of accreditation. FSU agreed to offer dual degree programs in Business Administration and Secondary Education along with UCB. The FSU Board of Control had complete authority over the development of those degree programs and all academic policy governing them: the nature of the curricula, the admission and retention standards, the appointment and supervision of faculty, selection of text-books and resource material. It had administrative authority over any UCB personnel working with the FSU degree programs. When UCB was opened, FSU degree programs (developed for the American undergraduate) were transplanted directly from FSU at UCB. The very same course outlines and textbooks used at FSU were used in Belize. No attempt was made to adapt the curricula, and no Belizean content was allowed in the curricula (Aird, pp. 173-174).

The agreement between the FSU and the Government of Belize, and later UCB, hinged on the North Central Association's granting permission to FSU to offer degrees in Belize. FSU, however, failed to secure the NCA's permission, and omitted to inform UCB that it did not have permission to offer degrees in Belize. The exposure of the unauthorized FSU degree programs in Belize resulted in the NCA placing a Memorandum of Record on FSU's file and FSU breached its agreement with the University College of Belize in May 1990. FSU was instructed to withdraw from its programs in Belize, or lose its accreditation (Letter from Dr. Gerald Patton, Assistant Director of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools to FSU President Helen Popovich, May 1, 1999).

The academic year 1990-1991 was a turning point in the evolution of Belizean higher education and the UCB. Consistent with the policy of the new Government of the People's United Party of empowering Belizeans to direct their future, the University College of Belize initiated the development of the University College of Belize (UCB) as a national university serving Belize. The leadership of the university was invested in a qualified and experienced Belizean team and the university is organized into academic departments headed by Chairs. The FSU imposed curriculum was modified so that it became more relevant and responsive to the development needs of the country. Belizean content was introduced into the curriculum through such courses as Belizean history, Belizean Literature, Belizean Folklore, Marine Biology, and Archaeology. Furthermore, a partnership in the creation of relevant baccalaureate programs of study is forged between the two levels of the "2 + 2" system of higher education.

While Belize was still in a dependent, neo-colonial relationship with the United States and other developed countries, the separation of the University College of Belize (UCB) from Ferris State University (FSU) was the start of a process in which the university was more prudent about the relationships and partnerships it entered. While it is dubious that Belize will ever be at the center of the international knowledge network described by Altbach (1984) due to its small population and underdeveloped economy, the redefinition of UCB with its commitment to self-inquiry and a relevant curriculum with high standards and prudent international relationships could eventually lead to Belize becoming more of a contributor to the network.

The University of Belize

On August 1, 2000 the third, and final stage, in the evolution of Belizean higher education began. The University of Belize (UB) emerged from the integration of Government of Belize owned and financed tertiary level institutions and the University College of Belize. Many of the same principles that guided the formation of BELCAST led to the proposal for the University of Belize: Belize needed a national university that could offer a high standard of training and education in an increasing number of fields. It was envisioned that the integration of these five institutions would provide greater access to university education for Belizeans, an increased pool of well-educated university graduates to power the development of the country, and an enabled university community to engage research and development related to national development.

The process of integration began in January 1999, five months after the victory of the People's United Party (PUP) in the 1998 General Elections. A University of Belize Task Force was appointed to consider the feasibility of establishing the University of Belize from the merger of the five institutions, and to make recommendations on the shape and character of the university if the formation of the proposed university was affirmed. The Task Force was headed by a member of the House of Representatives and consisted of representatives of all ATLIB

institutions, including the five that would merge, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education. It also included members drawn from various sectors of government and the community.

The Task Force conducted an intensive and extensive process of consultations with all of the five institutions, soliciting from the faculties and student body their hopes and concerns regarding the merger and ultimately their support for it. Public consultations in the form of town meetings were also held throughout the country on a similar theme. The University of Belize was promoted as a national university throughout the country. After support was secured from the five institutions, the process of integration began with work teams being established in several areas: the UB legislation, Mission Statement, Academic Programs, Terms and Conditions of Services, Student Services and Finances. Each work team was made up of representatives from all five institutions. A UB Secretariat was established under the Direction of the President of UCB to oversee the establishment of the University of Belize. The Secretariat was staffed by selected members of faculties of the five institutions.

The Mission Statement of the new University of Belize (UB) reads:

The University of Belize is a national, autonomous, and multi-location institution committed to excellence in higher education, research and service for national development. As a catalyst of change, it provides relevant, affordable and accessible educational and training programs that address national needs based on principles of academic freedom, equity, transparency, merit and accountability (Inter-ministerial Task Force and the University of Belize Secretariat, December 1999).

The Goals of the University are:

- To promote knowledge, skills, and values needed to enhance the ability of all its students and faculty to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural developmental needs of Belize.
- To make available a range of curricular offerings that address national needs.
- To develop within the university community a culture of commitment to the development of Belize and the region (Central America and the Caribbean.)
- To establish a research capacity and a self-sustaining research culture within the University of Belize that will advance knowledge, support learning, and contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of Belize.
- To promote creativity and critical thinking among students and faculty in its entire curriculum offerings and activities.
- To increase access to adult and continuing education programs (Inter-ministerial Task Force and the University of Belize Secretariat, December 1999).

The University of Belize represents a second attempt by Belize to nationalize its higher education system by harnessing the strengths of institutions within what was a fragmented system. The Mission and Goals place a high premium on research and development activities within the university for knowledge advancement and national development. The University is committed to the development of Belize and the two regions it bridges Central America and the Caribbean. In short, the University of Belize has the potential to alleviate the educational and dependencies that have described Belize since its independence. However, there are several shortcomings that it will have to overcome if it to succeed in its Mission.

The University of Belize will have to institutionalise itself within the Belizean community. The short history of higher education in Belize has demonstrated that the posterity of institutions is subject to the political whim of elected leaders. The University of Belize must so integrate itself in the life of the Belizean community through service in vital areas (health, education, research and development, outreach activities etc.) that its value to the nation is recognized by all Belizeans. It has to become a national icon. We must make UB the place where every Belizean wants 'to be' at least once in his/her educational career, and where Belize turns for answers to its national problems.

While the a university has been created on paper through the passage of the University of Belize Act, and through the merger of five disparate institutions, the work of building the university must begin in the minds and hearts of the faculty, in an appreciation and valuing of teaching, service and research at this level, in a commitment to continued professional development, and to developing rigorous academic programs that directly respond to the developmental needs of Belize. The work of cultivating a university culture must begin in the minds and hearts of the university faculty. Scholarly and professional partnerships with colleagues in regional institutions, both in Central America and the Caribbean, as well as in other international institutions must be sought for mutual benefit.

UB has to work to develop significant partnerships with other tertiary level institutions so that their programs can articulate with those of the university. Together, those institutions graduate approximately 600 students annually

from their two-year Associate Degree programs. These students should be able to transfer into the UB without a loss of time and credits. Furthermore, these institutions have the potential to assist the University of Belize in fulfilling its Mission and Goals. For example, the St. John's Junior College brings half a century of experience in program development, delivery and service to the Belizean community. Its programs have achieved considerable recognition both within the Caribbean region and the United States. While the Corozal Junior College is only 15 years old it, too, has achieved considerable acclaim in the quality of the students it has produced. Both these institutions have solid programs in English, Spanish, Mathematics and Economics, as well as in Business and the Sciences. The graduates they have produced over the years excelled at the University College of Belize. Stann Creek Ecumenical Sixth Form, as well as St. John's Junior College, has a high quality history major to the Associate Degree level which should be continued at the University of Belize. Sacred Heart Junior College recently established in San Ignacio has exciting possibilities in its International Business and International Marketing programs, as well as in its programs in Eco-tourism (a defining feature of Belize's budding tourist industry) and Tourism Management, and its Environmental Science program. There is also an interest in establishing an Eco-archaeological major that could use El Pilar, a nearby Mayan archaeological site as a field laboratory. This initiative is being led by Dr. Anabel Ford of the University of California at Santa Barbara.

The junior colleges and sixth forms can also benefit by the expertise and resources available at the University of Belize, as well. Indeed, there is much to be gained from partnerships in program development and delivery between the two levels of the system.

Finally, the University of Belize will have to secure adequate financing for itself and its programs. A Director of Development has been appointed with the mandate of developing alternative funding arrangements for the institution through grants, gifts and consultancy work. However, Belize is not a wealthy nation. Development activities (i.e. funding activities) must be linked integrally to the research and academic activities of the institution. UB must create a niche for itself that will attract Foundations and will move it towards the centre of the international knowledge network. For example, its Marine Research Centre and its Natural Resources program can be developed to attract Foundation grants. Belize is making a name for itself as an eco-tourist destination because it protects its natural resources. Its flora and fauna, including its marine life, offer rich research activities. The same can be said of its multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, culturally diverse population and its rich, un-excavated Mayan ruins. These are all areas that can be developed to attract research and development grants. Inter-dependent partnerships can be established with other institutions where both UB and the foreign institutions can benefit.

Conclusion

While Belize won its political independence in 1981 and the campaign for its economic independence had barely begun, the campaign for psychological independence had been initiated in 1977 when the Committee for Sixth Studies conceived BELCAST. It continued through the development of the proposal for the reorganization and expansion of BELCAST and the development of the Belmopan campus, the integration of the Belize Teachers' College, the successful publication of several issues of the BELCAST *Journal of Belizean Affairs*, and the funding of the expansion project through the European Economic Community. The campaign for psychological independence suffered a reversal in fortunes with the 1984 victory of the United Democratic Party (UDP) at the polls in the General Elections and the subsequent closure of BELCAST. The closure of BELCAST and the establishment of UCB under the authority of Ferris State University (FSU) of Grand Rapids, Michigan are representative of the lack of clear policy and planning at this level.

The creation of the University of Belize in the year 2000 represents a second attempt to rationalize the planning and delivery of relevant tertiary education that is responsive to the needs of a developing and independent Belize, that nurtures the psychological independence spoken of by Murphy (1990), and that helps to define a Belizean consciousness and identity within this shrinking world.

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HTML last revised 17th March 2003.

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