



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

NEWS RELEASE

For further information, please contact the University Marketing and Communications Office at telephone 868-663-9392 or email Rhonda.Jaipaul@sta.uwi.edu or Shyvonne.Williams@sta.uwi.edu

For Immediate Release

The UWI establishes COVID-19 Task Force.

The UWI Regional Headquarters Jamaica. Friday, February 28, 2020. Once again, The University of the West Indies (The UWI) is launching a Task Force to assist with the mobilisation of the region's public health providers to deal with an incoming virus. Four years ago, the Zika virus triggered the response; today it is COVID-19.

Again, the Task Force will be chaired by The UWI's Professor Clive Landis, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies and former Director of the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre, who has considerable experience in the field of Caribbean public health.

The University is currently delivering a software engineering degree programme at its joint Institute in Suzhou, China, and has a large registered cohort of Caribbean students. It is engaged directly with public health officials in Suzhou, Caribbean diplomatic corps in Beijing, and the leadership of its partner university, the Global Institute for Software Engineering (GIST).

Vice-Chancellor of The UWI, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles stated, "Against the background of dealing with its internal affairs in China, The UWI has been working in close collaboration with regional health ministries and the relevant CARICOM agencies." The purpose, he added, is to "Provide the necessary scientific data on the virus and to work with government colleagues in creating an effective communications strategy for the region." He concluded saying, "The Task Force will have a critical role to play in solutions building in the immediate future".

Membership of the Task Force is drawn from the regional UWI medical faculties and external experts experienced in the laboratory and field deployment of an active scientific approach.

Commenting on the work of the Task Force, Professor Landis stated, "It is right that The UWI should deploy its full expertise as a public academy to help Caribbean communities cope at this instance of the COVID-19 epidemic. The primary emphasis of the COVID-19 Task Force will be to provide accurate and reliable information through UWItv and other channels of communication. Armed with good information and strong partnerships we will get through this viral outbreak as we did for 'swine flu', Chikungunya and Zika before it."

End.

About The UWI

For over 70 years The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has provided service and leadership to the Caribbean region and wider world. The UWI has evolved from a university college of London in Jamaica with 33 medical students in 1948 to an internationally respected, regional university with near 50,000 students and five campuses: [Mona](#) in Jamaica, [St. Augustine](#) in Trinidad and Tobago, [Cave Hill](#) in Barbados,

[Five Islands](#) in Antigua and Barbuda and an Open Campus. As part of its robust globalization agenda, The UWI has established partnering centres with universities in North America, Latin America, Asia, and Africa including the [State University of New York \(SUNY\)-UWI Center for Leadership and Sustainable Development](#); the Canada-Caribbean Studies Institute with Brock University; the Strategic Alliance for Hemispheric Development with Universidad de los Andes (UNIANDES); the UWI-China Institute of Information Technology, the University of Lagos (UNILAG)-UWI Institute of African and Diaspora Studies; the Institute for Global African Affairs with the University of Johannesburg (UJ); The UWI-University of Havana Centre for Sustainable Development with the University of Havana (UH) and the Canada-Caribbean Institute with Brock University.

The UWI offers over 800 certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in Food & Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities & Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science & Technology, Social Sciences and Sport.

As the region's premier research academy, The UWI's foremost objective is driving the growth and development of the regional economy. The world's most reputable ranking agency, Times Higher Education, has ranked The UWI among the top 600 universities in the world for 2019 and 2020, and the 40 best universities in Latin America and the Caribbean for 2018 and 2019. The UWI has been the only Caribbean-based university to make the prestigious lists. For more, visit www.uwi.edu.

(Please note that the proper name of the university is The University of the West Indies, inclusive of the "The", hence The UWI.) www.uwi.edu