

Bermudez installed as UWI Chancellor

By Julien Neaves

Newly installed University of the West Indies (UWI) Chancellor

Robert Bermudez said that UWI must work with other learning institutions, starting with primary school system, to ensure it receives better prepared students.

Bermudez, a local entrepreneur who transformed his family-owned business to a regional business throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, also said UWI must see itself as an exporter of education and that attracting international students would both improve finances and aid in diversity.

He was installed as UWI's sixth Chancellor at a gala ceremony last Saturday night at the Daaga Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus.

Bermudez said that the university must continue to grow its commercial activities and partner with the private sector and contributing territories in endeavours that require stepping out of its comfort zone.

He also said the university must look to not only produce produce certified persons but also energise young people as he stressed that social skills, and empathy were as important for success as technical skills.

He said UWI's entrusting its leadership to someone outside of academia (himself) showed that in its 70th year, it was "recalibrating itself to the demands of the future." He said that he started life as a baker and he still sees himself that way, and him standing as UWI chancellor has made him aware of the "vagaries of life."

Bermudez thanked UWI for the "extraordinary honour" and praised his immediate predecessor Sir George



New University of the West Indies (UWI) Chancellor, Robert Bermudez, second from right, stands with President Anthony Carmona, second from left, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, right, and UWI's Vice Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles, at his installation ceremony last Saturday at the Daaga Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus. PHOTO BY ROGER JACOB

Alleyne, who served from 2003-2017, as a "great West Indian" who had dedicated his life to the service of his country, his region and UWI.

Bermudez said that as UWI turned 70, many Caribbean countries were approaching their 50th year of independence and while the region may not have the material wealth of other countries, "we are not backward; we are rich in talent."

He said the world was changing at an astonishing pace and UWI must embrace change. He predicted that technology will displace many traditional jobs, saying that UWI has a pivotal role to train young people for this changing world.

Among those in attendance

at Bermudez's installation were President Anthony Carmona, Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, Education Minister Anthony Garcia and other ministers, former UWI St Augustine principal Bhoewar, Caribbean Court of Justice President Sir Dennis Byron and regional ministers of education.

UWI Vice Chancellor Sir Hilary Beckles in his remarks said Bermudez's installation was a special moment that cries out for change and transformation, a crossroad where UWI has "chosen a different path" and "a direction to radically transform the nature of our operations and the quality of service and our commitment."

He said 2017/2018 academic year was the 70th year of the

Brian Copeland, said that the campus was totally committed to an agenda that inculcates a "culture of innovation." He told Bermudez that given UWI's task and Bermudez's stellar and successful leadership in the Caribbean business realm, UWI and the St Augustine campus in particular "sees great hope for success in future endeavours. Mona Campus Principal Professor Archibald McDonald said it was a "distinct honour" to welcome such a distinguished Caribbean entrepreneur to the join the rank of Chancellor.

"Chancellor Bermudez's exceptional business acumen and revolutionary leadership skills will undoubtedly push our institution into a new era of growth and development which we so desperately need," he said.

Cave Hill Campus Principal Professor Eudine Barthelemy said that the distillation of Bermudez's entrepreneurial acumen into the university's internal processes and external civic operations was being eagerly awaited, as she expressed the hope that UWI will attain financial sustainability, enlarge its international footprint through cost effective measures, expand access to underserved populations and aligned itself with governments, civil society and the private sector.

Open Campus Principal Dr Luz Longworth said that Bermudez introduced himself to her as "a simple baker" but she said he was a "super baker" who has had entrepreneurial success in his own business ventures and also contributed his outstanding managerial and leadership skills to others.

She said that the installation of Bermudez, a global and regional entrepreneur, comes at a time when UWI was rolling out its new and energising strategic plan.

"He knows when and how to get to the Crix of the matter," she quipped.

President of the Guild of Students at St Augustine, Jonathan St Louis-Nahous, said that the choice of a self-educated man like Bermudez as Chancellor represented a new perspective of UWI and showed that it's function was more than educating the region, that it was shaping the direction of its growth.

university and it has been an outstanding period of service for which the university can be justly proud. Beckles said, however, that it cannot be business as usual and UWI must rapidly evolve or become obsolete.

He reported that a balance scorecard system was being developed which would hold everyone accountable, from the Chancellor, the campus principals to the caterers.

He said that UWI must return to its activist roots and comment on issues such as economic development, control of crime, reparations and rebuilding of the West Indies cricket team.

He asked Bermudez to inspire, guide and empower them at UWI. St Augustine Campus Principal, Professor