

George A. O. Alleyne
Chancellor, University of the West Indies
October 22, 2005

A University for All
(Cave Hill, Barbados)*

Last year I began what I hope will be a tradition-that of welcoming our early graduates to our ceremonies. I do this as an act of gratitude, as to a great extent the reputation of this University has been built on their achievements. I wish them to stand so that you can recognize and salute them.

One cannot help but feel excited when one enters the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies. There has been tremendous growth in the student population, which now stands at approximately 7000 and represents an increase of 21% over 2004. The growth is 14% over the projected annual growth rate for Cave Hill as projected in the University's Strategic Plan, 2002-2007. When one sees the physical development, sees the bright faces of the ever younger students and reads of the many and varied academic offerings, one cannot but marvel at how far we have come in what for a university is a short time. One must recognize those who have put so much energy and talent in bringing us to where we are-from Sir Sydney Martin to Sir Keith Hunte to Pro-Vice Chancellor Beckles and their staffs. This feeling of accomplishment must cause us all to accept that we hold stake in the enterprise and wish it to continue to prosper and flourish.

The graduates, their parents and friends hold stake in that they would never wish to see the degree or diploma that they receive lose currency. Our alumni for reasons beyond mere nostalgia wish to know that future generations will benefit as they did from time spent here. The Faculty likewise would wish to see accumulation of results from the time and energy spent in discovering new knowledge and in transferring to their charges the inquisitiveness they will need for the life-long learning. The administration has a justifiable pride in knowing that it provided and helped to maintain much of the infrastructure that is necessary for the maintenance of any worthwhile creation. And of course the public which has been so generous in its support of the institution would wish to see ever-increasing returns from the investment it has made in an institution on which it pins much of its hopes for a better tomorrow. A graduation ceremony allows all these interested parties to come together in one place to celebrate the passage of yet another group of from one stage to another, and to rejoice with them on their preferment. But the continuation of any institution is not automatic and ever so often we in the University have to reflect on what we must do to ensure it. And I speak of the continuity of an institution that continues to enjoy being the regional University of the West Indies. Many

* Graduation Address, Cave Hill, 22 October 2005

of us from time to time have to consider the responsibility that devolves on us to continue to merit this designation. I recall vividly a speech given by Sir Roy Marshall some thirty odd years ago when he articulated the meaning of regionalism in university terms. He said;

“A regional university has certain basic characteristics: it is a regionally financed operation; it has a regionally composed governing body; its academic and administrative staff comprises men and women from the entire Commonwealth Caribbean as well as from outside; its student body is drawn from the entire region. These characteristics are more than matters of form. They represent an essential minimum, and departure from any of them would quickly lead to the dismantling of the regional university”.

He would also say in other fora that the essence of maintaining its relevance lay in it being the University of all the Caribbean, from the Bahamas to Trinidad and Tobago and from Belize to Barbados. It is a tribute to successive university administrations that they have managed to ensure that the majority of those characteristics set out by Sir Roy are still in play.

How can it continue to do so? The ceremony in which we are participating here today is a clear example of one of the needs being fulfilled—the need for human resources. I would invite you to look at the variety of the academic courses to see the range of skills being developed, all of which are relevant to the Caribbean’s needs. The Masters Program in International Trade Policy will build the trade negotiating capacity especially within the OECS. These are skills that the Caribbean needs desperately as we try to understand and confront the mega blocks in the various trade organizations that have nothing against us, but nothing for us.

I am impressed by the academic flexibility. There are masters’ programs that combine computer science with meteorology; French with management and political science with law. We have come a long way from the days of rigid separation of disciplines and clearly acknowledge that the Caribbean professional will have to function in a world in which disciplinary flexibility is vital. But like every modern university we are facing what the Economist describes as “a thunderstorm of changes so fundamental that some say the very idea of the university is being challenged”. And it goes on to describe four reasons for these changes.

There is what is described as a “massification” of higher education. We in the Caribbean are struggling to achieve the target of 15% of our eligible cohort in higher education and the University is expanding its intake at a rapid rate. This increase in higher education is occurring all over the world. Second is the growth of the importance of what Peter Drucker described as the knowledge worker. We will have to depend more on our brains than our brawn. Third is the ever increasing interconnectedness that is a result of globalization. Some of our countries are promoting higher education as an export industry that attracts foreign direct investment and we ourselves, partly because of our geography are trying to overcome distance in providing the instruction that is needed.

Finally there is increasing competition. We are being forced to compete with foreign institutions that provide instruction and are attractive to some of our major stakeholders. I am pleased that most of our governments recognize the difference between instruction offered by others and the value of an indigenous institution that is concerned not only with instruction, but with the development problems of our region.

Those development problems of our region must be the concern not only of governments, but also of all society and I hope that our graduates will take more than a passing interest in them. It is not only the economists who are concerned about development. Recently, I had the honor to chair a Commission on Health and Development established by the CARICOM Heads of Government and we showed that our region is facing major health threats which will impact on other aspects of our development. We informed the Heads that the Caribbean had done well as far as the control of the traditional communicable diseases especially those of children. But there are several other problems that confront us such as obesity and its co-morbidities of diabetes and hypertension, HIV/AIDS and the sequelae of injuries and violence. I know you will not be amused or proud when I tell you that surveys show that about 60 percent of Barbadian women and forty percent of Barbadian men are overweight or obese. This has enormous consequences for our health services. The University through its research is actively involved in the study and control of obesity and the chronic diseases and the work of Professor Fraser and his staff in the Chronic Disease Research Center is of immense value both here and regionally

The epidemic of HIV/AIDS is still with us, although Barbados has shown that a well designed program with firm political commitment and competent technical leadership can be successful in addressing the epidemic. One of the problems which I encounter regularly throughout the Caribbean is the stigma and discrimination that attend HIV/AIDS. I continue to be concerned at the depth of the feeling about this disease and opprobrium for the social and sexual practices that are assumed, often in error to be associated with it. The University is deeply involved in the efforts to control the epidemic, and I must thank the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO for their support for a chair in education and HIV/AIDS and I hope that we will not stand aside from trying to educate our publics of the harm done to society when stigma and discrimination drive the AIDS epidemic underground and make control more difficult. The control of these health problems will demand the involvement of all of the Caribbean's social partners, and I hope that you new graduates will be actively involved in one or other of the groups which our leaders have designated the social partners.

I referred to the excitement in the Cave Hill Campus of the University and there are many reasons for using that term, as the achievements this year have indeed been remarkable. I have mentioned the growth in enrolment and I wish to couple my satisfaction at that with my thanks to the staff which has been able to accommodate the increase and still show such good results.

During the year, the University gave its approval for the expansion of the School for Clinical Medicine and Research into a full-fledged Faculty of Medical Sciences. The

School continues to emphasize research and to inculcate into its graduates those basic skills of clinical practice that are as fundamental now as they were in the days of Hippocrates. I was interested to note the introduction of a medical humanities rotation that included medical ethics, medical history and personal development.

The Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences revised key programs to maintain relevance in the face of new dynamic technologies. The Faculty of Humanities and Education increased its offering in Literatures in English, with two new courses in West Indian literature, while the Center for Gender and Development Studies offered a minor in the Social Sciences.

A number of new graduate programs were introduced in areas such as Financial and Business Economics, Resource Management and Environmental Studies and Cultural Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The University moved aggressively to develop a new slate of fee-based taught masters' programs. These are expected to contribute significantly to the Campus' achievement of the goal set by the University and Campus Grants Committees that the University must reduce its dependence on government financing and seek to reduce the share of Governments' contribution to 50% or less. I view this development positively as while I would not wish to see the University without government support, I have been attracted by data that I read recently showing that the best universities in the world are those that do not have any single dominant source of support. One such source of support in the best universities is its alumni and we are making every effort to put in place the mechanisms that will allow the alumni to play their part.

The University's Strategic Plan emphasizes the centrality of students to its mission by identifying student-centeredness as one of its main objectives. This has had special resonance at the Cave Hill Campus since an internal university audit found that the student amenities, facilities and services were among the least developed among our three Campuses. In addition, our students of UWI, including those at Cave Hill, largely though the absence of appropriate out-of-classroom experiences, lack full preparation for the market place, and in some respects an insufficient awareness of their civic responsibilities.

In response to these concerns the Campus has, over the past year, designed and commenced implementation of The Student Amenities Initiative which addresses key areas related to health and counseling; employment and placement services, arts and culture, literary and debating activities, sports, transportation, food services and recreation. It is geared to preparing our students for leadership and the world of work as an integral part of the university experience. It expands the present mentorship programme and career employment workshops and gives increased attention to career guidance and planning and job search techniques. It provides for encounters with employers in internships and job attachments. It also provides training in communication skills for the workplace and society generally. It will permit the Campus to participate fully in the University wide-co-curricular credit system. It will through a Student

Enterprise and Empowerment Development (SEED) programme counsel and inform students towards personal financial management and development.

The Campus' administration has worked in partnership with the student body to define an Operational Plan for implementation of this initiative, which, consistent with the University Council's decision, is being funded by a special fee. I make special mention of this to indicate that we consider our role as going beyond that of instructor to one of educator, using that word in its pristine sense.

The infrastructure is now largely in place for the expansion of cricket as a sport and an academic discipline. The facilities of the Cricket Complex have been renamed the Sagicor Cricket Operations and Research Enterprise (SCORE) in recognition of the contribution of \$1M made by SAGICOR to its development. The facilities comprise the 3 Ws Oval; the Garfield Sobers Indoor Cricket School; the Malcolm Marshall Outdoor School and what will be a unique facility: the CLR James Cricket Library and Research Centre. The supportive environment which these facilities will provide has already been recognised by the WIBC which has relocated its Cricket Academy to Cave Hill. The 3Ws Oval has been selected as the venue for the four warm-up matches for the 2007 ICC World Cup. This is the first occasion on which a World Cup match will be played at the University, and it presents an unrivalled opportunity for the University's brand to be placed before a world audience.

In order to ensue greater relevance and effectiveness of its programming, the Campus established a Consultative Commission consisting primarily of private sector individuals, to advise on program design and development relevant to the strategic direction of the economy and society generally and to private sector and national training needs in particular. The Commission, chaired by Sir Allan Fields, is expected to complete its work shortly and I am grateful to it for undertaking this important task.

With a view to giving greater impetus and focus to its regional research agenda and in recognition of the role that the University is positioned to play in support of the CSME, the Campus has re-designated the area known as the Centre for Multi-racial Studies Compound as the CARICOM Research Park. This area, which already houses the Federal Archives and programmes with a regional focus, will also house:

- The Centre for International Trade in Services;
- The Sir Shridath Ramphal Collection (Sir Shridath has generously donated his extensive collection of books and papers to the Campus);
- A Centre for Integration Studies;
- The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies.

You will be pleased to hear that on October 25, 2004 the permanent home of the Federal Archives, a collection of the documents, papers and artefacts of the West Indies Federation was opened at the Cave Hill Campus by the Prime Minister of Barbados. The furnishings and equipment for the facilities were funded by a direct grant from his Office and I wish to thank him for his generosity.

I mentioned the physical development that is taking place and the Capital Development Program of the Campus during the last year continued to focus on two broad areas: first, expanding the present facilities for teaching and student amenities to relieve the acute space shortages and critical deficiencies resulting from the rapid increases in student enrolment over the last three years; and second, development and planning activities to make possible the transfer and effective utilization of additional lands promised by the Barbados Government. These additional lands include the 34 acres at Black Rock and all lands contiguous to the Campus and still in government ownership. Their acquisition is vital to the long-term viability of the Cave Hill Campus. Work has also been taking place on the acquisition and development of the additional lands expected to be acquired from the Barbados Government. A physical development plan for the immediate through longer term development of the Black Rock site was completed and progress made on negotiations with CBC for the transfer and relocation of its facilities from the site

Work has begun and is proceeding satisfactorily on the construction of a contemporary Centre for the Performing and Visual Arts, and an office block to provide much needed office space. The capital development program also included a modern office and teaching facility for the School of Education; a significant expansion of the School of Continuing Studies at the Pine; additional offices for the Board for Distance Education and non- Campus Countries; and the completion of technical design work for additions to the Department of Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics.

. Work also proceeded with technical design and financial studies for the construction of accommodation and other facilities that will, in the first instance, serve as the 2007 World Cup Cricket Village, and other teaching and student oriented facilities. The Village, which will subsequently provide student and visitor accommodation, will become a most important legacy for Barbados and the University beyond the World Cup.

I wish to thank the Ministries of Housing and Lands, Public Works, Finance and Economic Development and Education, and their officials, as well as the Board and Management of CBC, for their support and cooperation on this most far-reaching enterprise.

I am always pleased to recognize our private sector partners. A loan facility in excess of \$4.2 Million dollars was concluded with CLICO International Life Assurance with provision for conversion of \$1.525 million into grants. This facility has financed the construction of a new Teaching Block which came on stream in December 2004, and which followed CLICO's financing of the upgrading of the Lobby and entrance to the administration building.

Memoranda of Understanding were concluded with other private corporations for BBD\$2.6M over five years in support of capital projects, as follows:

- Sagicor Financial Corporation through which a gift of BBD \$1,000,000 will be made over a three year period for development of the 3Ws Oval, Walk of Fame, Indoor Cricket School, Cricket Library and Research Centre – renamed the Sagicor Cricket Operations and Research Enterprise (SCORE);
- Royal Bank of Canada through which a gift of BDS\$600,000 will be made over a five year period for outfitting of the Creative Arts Centre;
- Barbados National Bank Inc and Republic Bank Limited through which the Banks will make a gift of BBD\$1,000,000 toward the construction of the Visual Arts Centre, Dance Studio & Music Room/Gallery in the Creative Arts Centre.

Last year I mentioned the Arthur Lewis Awards for OECS nationals, and you will be pleased to know forty awards were made in 2005/6, with six of these reserved for the indigenous people of the OECS and one for sports development.

This year we will welcome 1339 new graduates including 103 persons who have obtained graduate degrees. Approximately half of these are in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. Seventy persons have obtained First Class Honors and 376 Upper Seconds. We have seen almost a doubling of the number of postgraduate degrees compared with last year. This has been due mainly to a doubling of the masters' degrees in the Faculty of Humanities and Education. This is quite a remarkable achievement, and I wish to congratulate not only those who have done so well, but also the whole University Faculty for producing such splendid results.

I wish to thank those members of staff who are retiring. I hope they feel proud and satisfied with what they have accomplished. They include Professor Elsie Le Franc, Professor John Mayo, Dr.Farley Brathwaite, Ms Grace Franklin, Ms.Icilda Johnson, Mr.Kendrick Burke, Mr.Winston Lucas and Mr.Manpriel Waterman. But I wish to recognize especially Mr. Peter Bynoe who is retiring after having given sterling service as office assistant/driver for 35 years and 9 months.

I have included a special message to all graduates in their graduation package, but I would emphasize again the responsibility you owe to your family who supported you and to your University from which you are now graduating. You can in some measure discharge the responsibility to both by continuing to search for knowledge and apply it for the benefit of your fellow man, by being a good citizen and by holding up your end wherever the game of life is played. Some of you will stay here in the Caribbean and it is in the natural order of things that some will leave. I would only ask that all of you remember this place always, be aggressive in seeking information about it and we will undertake to respond and let you know what happens here. I expect you to be faithful sons and daughters of the Pelican and return in years to come to be applauded as we applaud today those who blazed the trail for you. We wish you to support the University. All great universities take pride in showing the achievements and contributions of their alumni. We ask no less of you.

To the parents and relatives of the graduates, I say well done and congratulations. In the not too distant future we will also be communicating with you as we communicate with the graduates. We thank you for having entrusted your child or relative to us and we hope that you are satisfied that your support and sacrifice has been worth it.

So let us all get together and feel alright as we celebrate this ancient rite of passage that has marked universities through the ages.