

## Recovering from the economic impact of COVID-19



*Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global Affairs,  
Ambassador Dr. Richard Bernal, Professor of Practice*

The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused a major contraction in economic activity. The ultimate magnitude will depend on how long the pandemic lasts, the cost of bringing it under control and how much it will require to reactivate the national economies. We share some ideas on what might be done to stimulate economic recovery, focusing on Jamaica.

First will be fiscal stimulus. Some of the immediate consequences will have to be taken care of by fiscal and monetary macroeconomic stimulus packages and social relief measures. The capacity to boost the level of economic activity will necessitate a substantial reallocation of government expenditure to public health and this will deprive other objectives of the funds so diverted. The capacity for increased fiscal expenditure will be limited while tax revenue is lower than projected and will require borrowing both within Jamaica and from external sources including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. This is an unfortunate development just when Jamaica was reducing its debt/GDP ratio but it is unavoidable. Securing financing from China should not be overlooked.

Second, easing monetary policy by increased credit and lower interest rates while targeting use that does not put pressure on the exchange rate and international reserves: production, investment, employment particularly in manufacturing and agriculture—not consumption and imports. Private financial institutions will have to support their customers with creative refinancing. Venture capitalists not vulture capitalists will be especially valuable.

Third, the resurrection of tourism as the engine of economic growth and main source of foreign exchange earnings. Innovative marketing strategies involving discounts and capitalising on our physical proximity to the U.S. The physical plant is ready and so are the workers but it will need resources. Cruise shipping will take longer to recover and may never be quite the same again.

Fourth, agriculture needs much more support—not money but organisation—to get more local food purchased and if necessary put temporary, very high import duties on products which are grown in Jamaica or where local substitutes are available. The country can do without American apples and imported orange juice and coffee for a couple months..

Fifth, the central government should be trimmed by reducing the number of ministries and making their operations more efficient. Less ministers of state but a full minister of education will be needed, the incumbent being minister without portfolio since March 2019. The private sector is already making brave and innovative efforts and this needs to be matched in the public sector without laying off any civil servants.

Sixth, the policy of lockdown has to be applied with greater sensitivity to the poor who, given the nature of their accommodation and transport and how they earn their living, find it extremely difficult to adhere to physical distancing and to purchase and store large amounts of food. Similarly, the lockdown needs to be sensitive to the deployment of production and the dispersal of employment

Finally, the economy has to be reopened so that it does not make the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic even worse. The reopening has to be orderly, selective and phased.

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## Canada Caribbean Institute now a reality

In under a year since the signing in April 2019 of the Memorandum of Understanding between The UWI and Brock University to work towards the establishment of the Canada-Caribbean Institute (CCI), the formal launch took place on February 17, 2020 at the Regional Headquarters during the opening session of the Canada-Caribbean Research Symposium, the inaugural event of the CCI.

### The launch

The mood at the launch was celebratory, with each of the speakers acknowledging the importance of the Institute. In his welcoming remarks, The UWI's Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Global Affairs, Ambassador Dr. Richard Bernal, gave a brief background to the genesis of the Canada Caribbean Institute, the idea for which came about in a conversation between Dr. Gervan Fearon, President and Vice-Chancellor of Brock University, and Professor, Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice-Chancellor of The UWI. "Leadership involves vision and the ability to go after ambitious targets", said Ambassador Bernal, referring to their idea of institutionalizing a research programme which would be policy oriented, aimed at refreshing, enhancing and revitalizing the long-standing, important relationship between Canada and the Caribbean.

For her part, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson-Smith, Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, charged the Institute with filling the gap of data and information about the Caribbean diaspora to provide a greater understanding to inform policy and strategic engagement. "Caribbean nationals have most certainly made significant contributions to the diversity – cultural, social and economic tapestry of Canada. And of equal importance is their abiding loyalty, philanthropy and socio-economic contribution to the sustainable development of their home countries", she said. Minister Johnson-Smith welcomed the fact that the Institute would incorporate institutions across Canada.

In addressing the importance of the Canada-Caribbean Institute to each of the two founding universities, Vice-Chancellor Beckles highlighted that historically "Canada has been CARICOM's leading and most reliable economic development partner in the post-independence era." In light of new challenges facing both regions, such as "the corrosiveness of climate change, instability in the global

banking and finance sector, the cultural underpinnings surrounding the movement of labour, diversification of vital tourism products, and new opportunities for participation in cultural industries", he said the time had come to "reengineer and upgrade this very special mutual development bridge".

Dr. Fearon spoke of the importance of showing research respect for the historic excellence illustrated in Canada-Caribbean bonding, and how this can stimulate new projects in the future. He insisted that the integrity that shapes the culture of collaboration which binds these regions should not be taken for granted.



*Brock University President, Dr. Gervan Fearon (left), and UWI Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, shake hands symbolising the launch of the Canada-Caribbean Institute.*



*High Commissioner Laurie Peters (first left), Minister Johnson-Smith (second right) and PVC Bernal (first right) join hands with Brock President Fearon (second left) and UWI Vice-Chancellor Beckles (centre) in a show of solidarity at the launch of the Canada-Caribbean Institute.*

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Speaking also as a diaspora son of Jamaica, he pledged that his professional commitment to the Institute transcends the specific world of the universities and resides in the broader theme of economic development in the Caribbean and in ensuring that the 'gold star' partnering continues to mutual benefit in the next two decades.

Her Excellency Laurie Peters, High Commissioner of Canada to Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and The Bahamas, who has been an ardent supporter of the initiative to establish the Institute from the outset, congratulated and thanked the leaders of the two universities for making the vision of the Institute come to fruition in such a short period of time. She charged the Institute to develop a focus on mobility, inclusivity and innovation to make sure that the partnership between Canada and the Caribbean is refreshed, that it is dynamic and forward leaning. She expressed the view that the relationship will thrive and that the Institute will be a key cornerstone of the relationship.

As a symbol of the formal launch, chair of the proceedings, Mrs. Karen Ford-Warner, Registrar of The UWI's Open Campus, invited the two leaders to shake hands. They were then joined by High Commissioner Peters, Minister Johnson-Smith and PVC Bernal in a show of solidarity.

### **The Canada Caribbean Research Symposium**

Supported by the Canadian High Commission and the Jamaican corporate community including Jamaica National Bank, Grace Kennedy Limited, Jamaica Producers Group Limited, and Coffee Traders Limited, the Symposium had a total of 96 participants from 12 institutions. In keeping with the purpose of the CCI to provide multi-disciplinary research and teaching to deepen and improve the relations between Canada and the Caribbean, and serve to examine issues affecting the Caribbean diaspora communities in Canada, there were 36 presentations over two days (February 17 and 18) on the themes: Caribbean Culture and the Diaspora; Caribbean Economic Growth and Trade with Canada; Social issues and Education in the Caribbean and Canada; and Health and the Environment in the Caribbean and Canada. The third day of the Symposium provided the participants with the opportunity to have individual meetings to further explore collaboration. Some took the opportunity to tour the Mona Campus or visit the Discovery Bay Marine Lab.

The first day of the proceedings was filmed by UWITV out of which there have been six programmes for airing on Flow TV. The full report on the Symposium will be available on the CCI portal, which is being hosted by Brock University.

At The UWI, the CCI will be housed within the Office of Global Affairs in the first two years. The Office of Research has made available US\$10,000 to the CCI as seed funding for research collaboration between UWI and researchers from Canadian universities. Seed funding for Brock University Researchers is also being made available by that university.

It has been proposed to hold the second CCRS on the Cave Hill Campus in February 2021.



*UWI Open Campus Registrar, Mrs. Karen Ford-Warner, chaired the proceedings of the launch of the Canada-Caribbean Institute.*



*A section of the audience at the Opening Session of the Canada-Caribbean Research Symposium*

## Collateral damage or opportunity: COVID-19 and the implications for The UWI's Global Online strategy



*Mrs. Pauline Francis-Cobley*

The COVID-19 pandemic has created major disruption in educational institutions worldwide. However, this disruption can lead to positive changes in the education sector. Like many higher education institutions, The University of the West Indies (The UWI) has had to move all its classes online and this shift could be a stimulus for future growth. The pandemic has forced us to reflect on and re-examine established practices for teaching and learning, reassess priorities, and explore new business models. In addition, The UWI will need to re-examine some of its institutional strategies in light of the changing economic and education landscape.

The uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic makes it difficult for institutions to plan effectively for the future. However, The UWI leadership has signaled that there is to be “no return to the past” and that the university is moving towards a new mode of operation.

The pandemic highlighted the need for greater resilience in our teaching and learning strategies, as the transition from face-to-face to online teaching presented many challenges for administrators, instructors and students alike. The limitations of insularity were exposed and the benefits of collaboration were illuminated. Most significantly, online learning was propelled to the forefront of our consciousness.

Fortunately, The UWI has long recognised the value of online learning and has actively sought to promote and expand online teaching and learning through innovative approaches such as The UWI's Global Online initiative. *How will COVID-19 affect The UWI's Global Online strategy?*

The main objective of The UWI's Global Online initiative is to extend The UWI's programmes and courses to markets across the world to build capacity and generate revenue. In order to assess the likely impact, if any, of COVID-19 on this venture, we will need to examine the critical drivers of success. These include (i) the global competition, (ii) the global demand for online education and (iii) the economic climate of target locations.

*The global competition:* It is expected that the number of competitors in the global online education market will increase as more universities begin to venture into the realm of online learning.

*The global demand for online education:* There is likely to be increased demand for online programmes and courses as students and universities alike adjust to the new reality of a post-COVID-19 education landscape. For many universities, the pandemic might result in a reduction in student mobility in the short-to-medium term due to health concerns and travel restrictions. Students may opt to study closer to home, thus, universities may need to offer more programmes online in order to retain/increase their international enrollment.

*The economic climate of target locations:* The pandemic has plunged most of the world's economies into recession. This means that many of the markets that were being targeted by The UWI for programme expansion will face economic hardships in the short-to-medium term. As a result, government as well as private funding for higher education will likely shrink in many countries. Many tertiary-level students and potential students will have to make difficult choices about their education in the near future. The economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 suggests that it is likely that enrollment patterns will shift over the next year or two - we might see a decline in enrollment in some areas and an increase in the number of online offerings.

It is difficult to predict what the education landscape will look like post COVID-19. [Moody's \(2020\)](#) predicted that for the fiscal year 2021, “universities face unprecedented enrollment uncertainty, risks to multiple revenue streams”.

Opportunities sometimes arise out of adversity. While enrollment might decline in some areas, new opportunities for the expansion of online learning will emerge. The economic crisis may force more mid-career professionals to pursue continuing education opportunities online, so that they can retool and have greater flexibility in their career choices.

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To take advantage of the opportunities that are likely to emerge, institutions will need to adopt a more agile approach to certification. They must be able to respond effectively to industry demands for shorter degrees and the delivery of micro-credentials and similar digital certifications. Institutions must also be proactive in determining market needs and respond quickly to those needs through modified programmes/courses or the development of new courses or training programmes.

So what are the implications for The UWI's Global Online initiative? We could look at it from two perspectives. There could be:

1. increased opportunities for expansion of The UWI's programmes
2. some collateral damage to The UWI's Global Online agenda

In order to take advantage of the opportunities for expansion previously mentioned, The UWI will need to look at new and innovative business models for expansion into the global arena. The need for collaboration (both internally and externally) becomes even more vital at this time, if The UWI is to successfully leverage opportunities for global expansion. Concomitantly, The UWI should also increase efforts to expand online programmes/courses within the region as a strategic imperative.

On the other hand, some collateral damage to The UWI's Global Online initiative is likely to occur. Wood (2020) highlights that Moody's downgraded its outlook for higher education in the United States from "stable" to "negative." This outlook is likely to be reflective of the global education landscape. Economic recession is looming in many, if not all, of the locations that were being targeted for global online delivery and the impact on student recruitment and retention is still unclear. The financial impact on The UWI in the short-to-medium term is also unclear. However, there are steps that can be taken to mitigate against the damage and reap rewards in the process:

*Assess the needs* - it is imperative now, more than ever, that market research be conducted to assess the new realities in target markets and the feasibility of selected UWI courses/programmes.

*Be agile and flexible* – deliver courses/programmes that meet the short-to-medium term needs of the public and private sectors both regionally and globally (e.g. short professional development training, flexible degree options).

*Adopt a One UWI approach* - it is imperative that The UWI ventures into the global online arena as a single entity and not as individual campuses competing in the global space.

*Assure quality* - it is imperative that the development and delivery of online courses/programmes at The UWI is of the highest quality, guided by established standards for instructional design and online pedagogy.

*Explore new avenues for funding* – a significant injection of funds is needed to facilitate market research, marketing and recruitment and upgrade of the technological environment. Opportunities for the funding of projects designed to revitalize economies should be explored.

Some might argue that it is risky to venture into the global online market at this time. However, with risks come rewards. Already, many universities are making all kinds of arrangements and establishing global partnerships in an effort to retain or capture a share of the international student market. The UWI needs to move quickly to exploit new opportunities within the region and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the importance of the University's Triple A strategy during a time of uncertainty – *Access, Alignment and Agility*. The UWI's Global Online initiative has the potential to become a significant source of revenue, even during a time of crisis. However, this is only possible if we facilitate greater **Access** through a dedicated online portal coupled with effective marketing, ensure that our programmes/courses are **Aligned** with the needs of society and are **Agile** in our response to those needs.

*References:*

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Pauline Francis-Cobley, Director, Office of Online Learning



## Latin America-Caribbean Centre contributes to global UWI

### *Joint Centre for the Sustainable Development of the Caribbean*

The UWI's global thrust achieved another milestone with the launch of the Joint Centre for the Sustainable Development of the Caribbean in partnership with the University of Havana (UH). An agreement for the establishment of the Centre was signed at UH on December 11, 2019 during a visit by Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles and Ambassador Gillian Bristol, Director of The UWI's Latin American–Caribbean Centre (LACC), who was key in developing the project. The signing ceremony took place at the offices of the Joint Centre at UH.

The Centre's mandate is to promote innovation and scientific application in three broad areas of regional development — application of medical research and innovations in critical areas of public health, such as diabetic foot amputation, invasive eye treatment, and cancer studies; scientific research into Caribbean natural products, and the industrialisation of research findings; and promotion of Caribbean culture and tourism, social justice issues, and commercial development in the area of cultural industries.

Vice-Chancellor Beckles described the signing as historic, as in its nearly 300 years of existence, this was the first time that a foreign institute of higher education had a physical presence within UH. It also marked the first time that The UWI entered an overarching inter-institutional relationship with UH although for some 30 years, the two universities had collaborated in the margins of their respective mandates, occasionally hosting visiting professors and lecturers, exchanging students, and promoting collaborative research projects in areas of mutual interests. The Joint Centre for the Sustainable Development of the Caribbean creates the institutional context for formal, top quality research collaboration to promote the sustainable, economic and cultural development of the people of the Caribbean.

In February 2020, the Vice Chancellor hosted the first round of bilateral talks aimed at initiating the operationalisation of the Joint Centre. UH Vice-Rector Dr. Mayda Goite, Dean of the Faculty of Law at UH, joined a team of senior UWI officials from the Mona Campus led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Dale Webber, along with Director of the Centre for Reparations, Professor Verene Shepherd, and Ambassador Bristol to discuss practical steps to advance the new relationship as well as some substantive collaborative activities. Plans are underway for the Management teams of both universities to meet in mid-2020.

At The UWI, the development of the Centre will be guided by distinguished scholars: Professor Terrence Forrester, Professor of Experimental Medicine and Chief Scientist at UWI Solutions for Developing Countries (SODECO), Professor Michael Taylor, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology, and Dr Tomlin Paul, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences. Ambassador Bristol will assist in the coordination of its formal establishment at The UWI.

### *Hemispheric University Consortium*

LACC coordinates The UWI's participation in the Hemispheric University Consortium (HUC), which was formally established in 2018. HUC is comprised of 14 top universities across Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, and the United States. The second meeting of the Consortium was held at The UWI's Regional Headquarters in Jamaica on October 22, 2019 and co-chaired by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles and Dr Julio Frenk, President of the University of Miami (UM). Details of the Consortium's governance were ironed out and agreed to in an MOU, signed by 12 of the 14 member universities present at the meeting. A roundtable discussion titled "Challenges to Health and Wellbeing in the Americas: Next Steps in Health System Reform" involving a panel of experts and chaired by the head of UM's Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas, Dr. Felicia Knaul, also took place in the context of the HUC meeting.

The HUC meeting also provided the opportunity for the signing of an MOU between The UWI and UM committing the two universities to exploring academic collaboration.



*From left: LACC Director, Ambassador Gillian Bristol; UWI Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles; UH Rector, Dr. Miriam Nicado Garcia, Rector; and UH First Vice-Rector, Dr. Dionisio Zaldivar Silva, following the signing of the agreement to establish the Joint Centre for the Sustainable Development of the Caribbean.*

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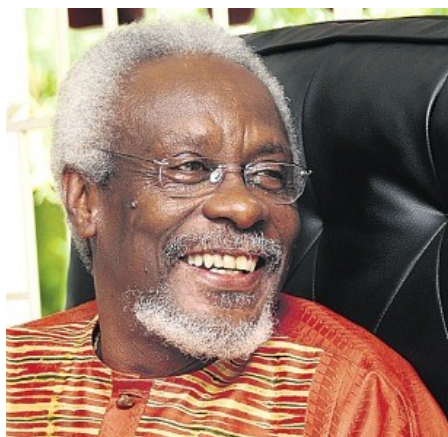
### *Strategic Alliance for Hemispheric Development*

The HUC meeting allowed for Vice-Chancellor Beckles to meet with the newly installed President of the University of Los Andes (Uniandes), Dr. Alejandro Gaviria Uribe, to discuss the advancement of the April 2019 agreement which established the UWI-Uniandes “Strategic Alliance for Hemispheric Development”, particularly in the areas of medical sciences, biotechnology, and cultural studies. The UWI’s University Dean of Medical Sciences, Dr. Peter Adams, Dean and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Mona, Dr. Tomlin Paul and Dr. Winston De La Haye, and Director of the Institute for Caribbean Studies at Mona, Dr. Sonia Stanley-Niaah, participated in the discussion, which included collaborative projects. The meeting committed to defining in 2020 the structure and operation of the Alliance, formally opening the office of the Alliance at Uniandes’ main campus in Bogota, and determining a mechanism for ensuring mutual recognition of courses by both institutions. Ambassador Bristol noted that the Alliance signified the first ever physical presence of The UWI in Latin America.



*Participants in the second meeting of the Hemispheric University Consortium (HUC) held at The UWI’s Regional Headquarters in Jamaica in October, 2019. UWI representatives: Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles (seated fourth from left); LACC Director, Ambassador Gillian Bristol (standing third from right), and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global Affairs, Ambassador Dr. Richard Bernal (standing fourth from left). President of Uniandes, Dr. Alejandro Gaviria Uribe (seated fifth from left). UM President, Dr. Julio Frenk (seated first right).*

## **PJ Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy**



*The Most Honourable P. J. Patterson*

**I**n line with the diplomatic objectives of CARICOM to strengthen and promote closer functional relations with the African Union, and the declared intention to create an Africa-Brazil-Caribbean Diaspora (ABCD) Commission to give greater effect to South-South economic development strategies, in November 2019 The University of the West Indies created the PJ Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy, named in honour of Jamaica’s former Prime Minister. Mr. Patterson, who serves as Trustee of the African Foundation, was also accorded the status of “Statesman in Residence”. He will direct the research and advocacy of the Centre, working in close collaboration with former and current presidents of African states, the African Union that has designated the diaspora the 6th region of Africa, the regional private sector, relevant international organisations, and CARICOM.

## OGA's database of agreements



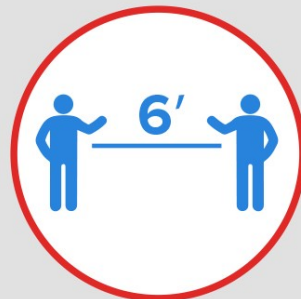
Ms. Sharon Estwick

The database of agreements across The UWI maintained by the Office of Global Affairs continues to expand. There are currently some 450 agreements (expired and current, confidential and non-confidential) uploaded, up from 411 in September 2019, with 305 institutions (educational, governmental, development agencies, and private companies) in 53 countries. The process of adding agreements is on-going, managed by Ms. Sharon Estwick, OGA's Administrative Assistant based on the Cave Hill Campus.

Work is also continuing with representatives of the office of the University Chief Information Officer (UCIO) to give members of the UWI community varying levels of access (viewing, downloading, uploading) to the database. Between December 2019 and January 2020, one volunteer each from the Mona, St. Augustine, Open and Cave Hill campuses participated in a test of remote access to the database. They were provided with a username and password generated by the office of the UCIO and were asked to attempt to search the non-confidential files, download the output of the search, view the pdf file of an agreement, and download the pdf file. They were provided with a user manual drafted by Ms. Estwick and Dr. Christine Marrett, OGA's Senior Programme Officer, both of who also drafted a user manual on uploading agreements to the database. The responses of the volunteers were shared with the representatives of the office of the UCIO, and should inform the next phase of making the database accessible to the UWI community. Until then, requests for information on or copies of agreements can be made to our email address: [pvcglobal@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:pvcglobal@uwimona.edu.jm).



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