

UWI Mona Campus adds Electronics Engineering Degree Course

The University of the West Indies' (UWI) Mona Campus has moved to fill the increased demand for tertiary training in engineering from Jamaican students, by introducing an Electronics Engineering Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree programme.

The programme, which commenced in September, comes against the background of what the institution describes as challenges some Jamaican students have experienced enrolling in engineering programmes at the UWI's St. Augustine campus in Trinidad and Tobago. Up to the end of the last academic year, only St. Augustine offered these courses, so the introduction of the course at Mona is expected to go a far way in producing qualified individuals to fill the demand, locally. Speaking at a function to launch the programme, at the Mona Visitors' Lodge, on Monday (November 9), Programme Coordinator, Dr. Paul Aiken, said that the increased sectoral demand for improved science and technology outputs, both locally and regionally, pointed to the successful demonstration that they are key drivers of economic and industrial development. He said that a study of Jamaica's needs, conducted by the Mona Campus, showed that there are numerous engineering needs which are either being met marginally or not at all. "Even traditional areas like civil, mechanical and process engineering were cited as being in need of a fusion of young engineers. The UWI has recognized this, and has contributed significantly to such developments, through its undergraduate and graduate programmes in the sciences and engineering," Dr. Aiken stated. He explained that a large number of pure and applied science programmes are offered at the three main campuses - Mona, Cave Hill (Barbados) and St. Augustine. Lamenting the "deep declining trend" in the number of Jamaicans pursuing engineering studies at St. Augustine, Dr. Aiken said that of the 1,419 students who were enrolled in the engineering faculty in 2007/08, only 53 were Jamaicans, and of that, only 12 were first year new students. He said that the enrolment for the new programme at Mona has already surpassed that amount. "This suggests that St. Augustine is not seen as an effective option for Jamaican students seeking tertiary engineering education. This is far from the past, when nearly half of the enrolment originated from Jamaica," he noted.

Dr. Aiken said that several reasons have been cited for the current situation, including additional expenses incurred due to relocation; reluctance on the part of some of Jamaican students to temporarily relocate; and the limited capacity for the number of new students in the engineering departments, which results in tight competition. The Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences proposed to offer engineering programmes at Mona, in order to prepare students to compete effectively for advanced placement at Level 2 of the engineering programmes at St. Augustine, in areas that are not offered at Mona. The three-year programme is structured so that, during the first year students are exposed to the foundation courses in engineering physics, computer science and mathematics, along with introductory courses in electronics and electrical circuits. The second year courses provide the core electronics background for the engineering discipline, along with more advanced engineering mathematics. Students are required to complete a one-year extensive project during the final year, along with the introduction to engineering management and account systems.