



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

OPEN CAMPUS

NEWS RELEASE

Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald Officially Inducted As First Principal of the UWI Open Campus



The Chancellor of the University of the West Indies Professor the Hon. Sir George Alleyne, congratulates the newly-inducted Principal of the Open Campus, Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald at Government House in St. Lucia.

Castries, St. Lucia, October 16, 2009: Amid showers of blessing and colorful blue, red, white and orange backdrops on the elegant grounds of the Governor General's mansion, Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald was inducted by the Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor the Hon. Sir George Alleyne, as the first Principal of the Open Campus on Friday, October 16, 2009. The ceremony opened with the traditional academic procession of UWI staff and faculty wearing the robes and colours of the University and then by the Chancellor's procession led by the mace-bearer, who carried the University's ceremonial mace symbolizing the continuing authority of the governance of the institution.

In attendance from across the region to witness this historic event were four Governors General, including Her Excellency Dame Dr. Pearlette Louisy, Governor General of Saint Lucia; His Excellency Sir Cuthbert Sebastian, Governor General of St. Kitts & Nevis; Her Excellency Dame Louise Lake-Tack, Governor General of Antigua & Barbuda; and His Excellency Sir Carlyle Glean, Governor General of Grenada. Also in attendance and bringing greetings to the Principal on behalf of the people of St. Lucia was The Honourable Mr. Stephenson King, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

The Honourable Mr. Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of St. Kitts & Nevis, the Honourable Colin Riley, Minister of Education from Montserrat and the Honourable McNeil Rogers, Minister of Social Development from Anguilla also came to celebrate with the Principal. Open Campus Council members in attendance at the ceremony included Sir Dwight Venner, Chairman, UWI Open Campus Council and Lady Venner; Dr. Sir Howard Fergus, Montserrat; The Hon. Charles Maynard, Dominica; Mrs. Patricia Charles, St. Lucia; and Professor Sir Roy Augier & Lady Augier, Jamaica.

Other University senior officials in attendance at the official ceremony, included, Professor E. Nigel Harris, Vice Chancellor; Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill Campus, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles; Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of the St. Augustine Campus, Professor Clement Sankat; Deputy Principal of the Mona Campus, Mr. Joseph Pereira; the University Registrar, Mr. C. William Iton; the University Bursar, Mr. Winston Bayley; and University Librarian, Ms. Jennifer Joseph.

Speaking of the necessity of the University to restructure itself to ensure that it serves more persons with higher education products and services around and outside of the region, the Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal issued her firm commitment to overseeing the development of the Open Campus to become the premier higher learning institution for open and distance education in the Caribbean region by the year 2015.

"Through the enhancement of its Distance Education capabilities, the Open Campus of the UWI, itself an innovative entity in the delivery of higher education in the region, seeks to contribute to the development of our Caribbean societies by transforming the learning – teaching enterprise to attract and engage adults and young adults seeking personal development opportunities as well as disaffected youth who may have dropped out of the education system early. The potential for an education system such as the Open Campus to transform societies and support the efforts of regional governments to develop the human capital of the region in such a way as to create societies that are ordered, industrious and prosperous is tremendous."

Attended by about 150 guests, the induction took place in St. Lucia, the homeland of Professor Simmons-McDonald, and it was part of two days of buoyant celebration of the Open Campus' two 'first' events, the Induction and the inaugural graduation ceremony of the class of 2009.

Bringing greetings to the Principal on behalf of her former students, UWI alumni and the Heads of Open Campus sites across the region, Mrs. Veronica Simon, Head of Open Campus St. Lucia, stated that, "We are extremely proud of our Principal. Hers is not an easy task, having to knit together 45 sites across 16 territories. We are in awe of the energy that drives her and the vision that inspires her and we are firmly committed to turning that vision into a reality that would take the UWI into a whole new realm as a truly regional institution."

Also speaking to the dynamism and vision of the new Principal were Mrs. Charmaine Gardner on behalf of the private sector in St. Lucia and Dr. Didicus Jules, Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council.

Professor the Hon, George Alleyne, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, performed the official induction of the Principal, placing the official mortarboard on her head, after which she received a standing ovation.

The St. Lucia School of Music Concert Choir performed the national anthem of St. Lucia and another interlude of music for the occasion. In addition to the formal processional and recessional music, the audience also enjoyed singing and instrumental performances by Elra Ermay and Luther Francois respectively.

The induction ceremony was followed by a reception.

About the Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal, Open Campus, UWI

Professor Simmons-McDonald officially began her tenure as the Open Campus Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal in January of 2006. A Saint Lucian by birth, Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald is a Professor of Applied Linguistics and is the first Pro Vice-Chancellor, as well as the first Principal of the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies. Professor Simmons-McDonald was a Faculty member at Cave Hill since 1991. She has provided leadership as Deputy Dean (Outreach -1993-1995); as Head of Department (1995-1999); as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education (2003-2007) at the Cave Hill Campus.

She has considerable experience in and understanding of the educational needs of the Eastern Caribbean countries. Her professional experience began in 1970 in the UWI School of Continuing Studies in St. Lucia as a part-time Instructor of English Language and Literature. She was also Acting Resident Tutor from 1973-1974 and served at the Mona Campus as Temporary Lecturer from 1977-1979. Her academic works include Exploring the Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages (2005), co-edited with Ian Robertson, Writing in English (1996) and the popular Heinemann Ginn Let's Work with English Series, Books 1-3 and a fourth book for CXC, which adopts an exciting, integrated, task-based approach to teaching English in Caribbean secondary schools.

Professor Simmons-McDonald's main research interests include: Applied Linguistics: Language Acquisition/Learning; Teaching of English in Creole Contexts; Literacy in French Creole.

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