

UCCI plans nursing, engineering degrees

By Alan Markoff

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The University College of the Cayman Islands will offer degrees in engineering and nursing as well as establishing a minimum-standard entrance exam for matriculation.

UCCI President Roy Bodden made the announcement Thursday during a meeting of the Rotary Club of Grand Cayman.

Mr. Bodden said the University College would work in tandem with George Town Hospital to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. He said the degree would be certified through either the University of Miami or Florida International University.

“All graduates will get a licence to practise in Florida as well as the Cayman Islands.”

Mr. Bodden said the degree programme in nursing would address a need in the Cayman Islands.

“Particularly if Dr. Shetty’s hospital comes on line,” he said, adding that the programme had been in the works even before the possibility of the new hospital arose.

The engineering programme will offer an associate degree in engineering technology, an applied degree.

“Graduates could stop at that point and go into the working world,” he said. “Or they could go on to get a bachelor of science in structural engineering, a professional degree.”

Mr. Bodden said UCCI had made an arrangement with Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey, for those students who wanted to go on to get a Bachelor of Science degree.

With regard to the associates degrees in engineering, Mr. Bodden said it was upscale version of the technical trade programme UCCI is already offering designed to create plumbing, electrical and construction engineers.

When Mr. Bodden made the surprise announcement at the Rotary meeting, he said even the Minister of Education Rolston Anglin – who was in attendance at the meeting to present the club’s Adventure in Citizenship Award – didn’t know of the development.

Speaking afterwards, however, Mr. Bodden said the new programmes had been taken to the UCCI board, which first gave a provisional go-ahead, subject to feasibility studies being done. The studies showed the programmes could work, he said.

Although he had hoped the programmes could start by September of this year, Mr. Bodden said it was determined that September 2011 was a better target date.

He said the programmes could be achieved with a minimum of new staff.

“The B.S. in nursing programme would run in collaboration with the hospital,” he said. “We would provide some staff and the hospital would provide some.”

Although some of the lab work could be done in UCCI’s existing science labs, other parts of the course study would have to be done at the hospital, he said.

Entrance exam

Another change coming at UCCI is the establishment of what Mr. Bodden called a “valid and reliable entrance exam to capture and place students to the level to which they belong”.

He said students would have to meet certain standards on the entrance exam to be able to matriculate to the University College.

“The entrance exam will be used to screen all applicants,” he said.

Mr. Bodden agreed that by setting a matriculation standard, the perceived quality of a UCCI degree will increase.

“We recognise in the past, that has been a problem,” he said.

Students who do not pass the entrance exam will have another option at UCCI. The college will offer a pre-college studies matriculation course.

“This will be a one-year course which brings them to the level they need to be for matriculation,” he said. “Rather than depriving them entrance, this programme is designed to enable and empower them.”

The course, which Mr. Bodden said was designed for students that come with no college pre-qualifications will focus on making the students proficient in basic math, English and digital literacy skills.

Other possibilities

Mr. Bodden said there were other developments he would like to see at UCCI.

“I would like to see a modern language laboratory, where people would learn Spanish, English as a second language and even Mandarin and Cantonese,” he said, adding that China is the next big world economy.

He said there were already developments with a programme in music and performing arts, namely with the establishment of a choir and dance troupe.

“We’re planning a concert in December that will probably surprise some people with the level of professionalism that will be achieved,” he said.

Mr. Bodden said a new atmosphere was being created at UCCI.

“We are quietly and unobtrusively making great strides at UCCI.”

Part of that new atmosphere entails dispelling the notion of entitlement that suggests that just because someone is Caymanian, they are entitled to a job, Mr. Bodden said.

“I constantly tell the students that they have to achieve to get ahead,” he said. “We live in a global workplace.”

Mr. Bodden said he made similar comments on a talk radio show recently and was criticised for doing so.

“My response was that patriotism was the last refuge of a scoundrel,” he said.

Although he took public criticism for saying what he did, Mr. Bodden said he received two telephone calls shortly after the radio programme thanking him for speaking his mind.