



Press Release: UCCI News

Date: Thursday, 8 July 2010

Contact: Pat Ebanks, 326-3173

pebanks@ucci.edu.ky

UCCI's President Roy Bodden Reviews his First Year

Delivering his first annual report at Thursday night's UCCI graduation, President Roy Bodden outlined the highpoints of his freshman year.

Graduating were some 150 of the more than 200-strong 2010 graduating class, members of which will face their various futures with an array of accomplishments, from master's and bachelor's degrees to certificates in various technical and vocational areas.

Commenting on his achievements, President Bodden, said the one in which he takes most pride, is the support that he has garnered from a range of private sector interests.

That support, he told graduates and their some 600 relatives, friends and supporters attending Thursday's ceremony, is "...one of the most obvious signs that the college is regaining its intellectual credibility and integrity -- its stock so to speak, among a key sector we serve," adding: "I am confident that as you move forward with your lives, you will find the success which you are merely tasting, and dreaming of, tonight."

The President said that his confidence in the future prospects of the class had been boosted by data collected by members of the 2010 class in the spring of this year. The study was a follow-up of all the bachelor degree graduates from the past four years. With an 83% return rate, the study, he said, demonstrated that 93% of UCCI graduates believe that their UCCI education has made a significant positive impact on both their lives and their careers.

Ninety-one percent of UCCI graduates polled indicated that they had received pay raises, promotions and/or new job offers as a result of obtaining a UCCI degree.

More impressively, he said, 58% of the UCCI graduates in the study had indicated that they were continuing their education in order to obtain a graduate degree or professional certification [for example, as Certified Public Accountant (CPA)]. Further, he said, none of the UCCI graduates

had indicated that they had encountered unusual difficulties in gaining entrance into respected graduate schools in the USA, Canada or the UK.

“In this respect, these data concur with years of testimonials from scores of UCCI associate degree recipients who have readily had their UCCI credits and degrees accepted by overseas universities when they have transferred to study abroad,” President Bodden observed.

Further, he said, among the albeit few employers of UCCI graduates who consented to interviews, the majority indicated that they found the career competency sets of UCCI-educated employees to be relevant and useful to their businesses.

“Graduands, this study has confirmed my sense that there has been a remarkable resurgence of support for UCCI among the private sector,” he said, relating that on the heels of this study have come some fairly substantial gifts to UCCI.

Among these illustrations of endorsement is O₂Micro’s grant of \$50,000, he said. The computer, communication and entertainment solutions provider has stipulated that the donation must go to equip the natural science laboratories at UCCI. Another equally impressive gift is a 12.5-inch Newtonian telescope that was donated by local resident Dr. Bill Hrudey, a retired neurosurgeon, philanthropist and engineering hobbyist who now lives in Cayman. It will come complete with a special-purpose observatory with a retractable roof. Then there is FirstCaribbean International Bank’s donation of \$20,000 in scholarship money.

Touching on another sphere of private sector liberality, Mr. Bodden reported to the graduation audience on the Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with a number of local companies partnering with UCCI in targeted industry training and preparation. Among participating companies is the Ritz Carlton, where UCCI faculty will be attached to gain insights into the needs of this high-end service provider, which in turn will offer internships to the students involved. Island Heritage Insurance’s staff will collaborate with UCCI faculty in offering instruction in a programme designed for those interested in careers in the insurance industry. Island Heritage has agreed to employ annually two interns from UCCI. Other companies are waiting in the wings to come aboard with similar MOUs.

In the area of facilities, a crowning achievement has been a state-of-the-art language laboratory at UCCI. To become fully operational in the coming year, this laboratory will serve the needs of persons interested in learning languages foreign to them, such as English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Later, given the increasing global interest in China, Mandarin or Cantonese may be added to the offering. In line with that, negotiations are underway with the local consulate of a non-English speaking country currently in her home country laying the ground work for a mutual student-exchange programme.

Meanwhile, Trent University, in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, and Elon University, of North Carolina, are also in discussions with UCCI regarding similar student-exchange programmes. Trent is looking at a one-year programme.

Turning closer to home, the Cayman Brac campus now enjoys more affordable accommodations, boosting services to the Sister Islands. That campus will accommodate a Microsoft Boot Camp next summer, when it will serve as a national recertification centre for the software giant. Next year's new, marine biology course will be taught from the Brac campus as well, the current facilities having scope for a laboratory.

At administrative headquarters on Grand Cayman, a similarly robust agenda is set for the September to June 2010 academic year, the lead plans of which are a feasibility study underway to gauge interest in a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing. (Clinicals would be conducted at the Cayman Islands Hospital). He is introducing an Associate Degree in Engineering Technology (ASET).

Ready to come on stream in September are arrangements for strengthening the entrance requirements. A key prong of this is a one-year pre-college course, called the Certificate of Pre-College Studies, designed for those needing to be brought up to the college entrance level.

Of significance also is the completion of a sick bay/nurse's office, in anticipation of the recruitment of a college nurse. The college bookstore is being relocated and expanded.

Given the task of balancing so many no doubt at times competing goals, Mr. Bodden could be forgiven were he to have adopted, at least temporarily, an inward-looking posture. However, his gratitude for all the community support, he said, had moved him to find ways of giving back. "After all," he said in his report, "a university is about service to the population which, in the first place, creates its need for being." This perspective resulted in the first of the university's outreach efforts, a partnership between UCCI's IT Department and the East End United Church's Community Outreach programme. UCCI provides the IT support and is helping to secure a suitable teacher.

This same spirit of giving is obviously being demonstrated by Mr. Bodden himself in a way that is not often seen. Since joining UCCI in mid-October last year, Mr. Bodden disclosed to the graduation audience, he has been donating one-tenth of his salary to developing music and the performing arts at the university. Among the direct beneficiaries of this unexpected gift, a new course will be introduced in the coming academic year in the area of music and the performing arts. Also funded from his pocket, a male and a female choral group, along with a combined choir, will give voice to UCCI's multi-faceted development in the upcoming year.

Student welfare was a key theme in the president's report. Of all the many achievements since taking office on 19 October 2009, he told the graduation audience, one that is perhaps closest to his heart is the "Men of Standard Programme". This brain child of Mr. Bodden is a mentoring and orientation programme designed to help Caymanian young men navigate the challenges of peer pressure, drugs, crime, delinquency and other pressures in a changing Caymanian society. The fifteen-week programme is open to any young man wishing to make a positive impact in the society.

During the recent ceremony marking the end of the first delivery of the programme, the Chair of the Board of Governors of the University College, Mrs Berna Cummins, was so impressed with the programme's potential that she issued a challenge for a similar initiative to be started for young women. This has since been taken up by Student Services Director, Mrs. Mary Anne Cannon; in September young men and women will have available respective opportunities for learning to cope with the challenges of a changing society.

Complementary to the Men of Standard Programme, President Bodden has started an annual Inter-dominational Ecumenical Service to mark the commencement of each academic year. The date designated for the second such service is 19 September, 2010, and he invited all interested persons in the wider community to attend.

Though obviously focused on these larger academic, cultural and spiritual initiatives, Mr. Bodden has not overlooked the perhaps more mundane but nevertheless important needs that often stymie student achievement. He disclosed that he had started a lunch fund with an initial \$1,000 allocation from his monthly gift to UCCI. "I hope that others will join me in this, as we really must reach out to fill these needs if we want our students to achieve to their potential." For these students, he is instituting a discreetly administered voucher system based on equally unobtrusive needs' assessment, he said.

Further, many students have difficulty securing transport to and from UCCI, to the point where it interferes with their studies, he said. He has engaged the Public Transport Board in discussions around organising safe and reliable transport to and from UCCI and all relevant points on Grand Cayman. The Public Transport Board will vet the drivers and will institute, in conjunction with UCCI, a ticketing system for which students will pay in advance.

Turning to some of the broader organisational needs of UCCI, Mr. Bodden said that a key achievement during the year was an increased consciousness among students about suitable dress within the context of the expectations of the larger society.

“As a result of that, upon my assuming the presidency, a dress code has been established, and female students are expected to dress modestly; for males, the dress code is acceptable casual or office-type dress,” he said.

These gestures, he said, along with a number of targeted interventions, has resulted in a noticeable air of order and security on the campus, further contributing, he said, to a more collegial atmosphere. “As we walk around the campus now, we see students using ‘free’ time to prepare themselves for classes, rather than engaging in less purposeful and productive activities that seemed to have been common practice in the past.”

On the faculty side, performance evaluations have begun to take on a more structured and formal aspect, commencing last semester with self-evaluations. This process will gain momentum in the fall with scheduled formal peer evaluations, to be followed by top-down appraisals by faculty chairs.

The President noted: “Faculty are encouraged to take their responsibilities seriously and to volunteer their time by helping with clubs and societies.”

Looking back on this busy year, President Bodden said he was moved by the willingness and the devotion of the faculty and the administration in working to boost confidence in, and integrity at, UCCI. “We are well on the way to establishing the intellectual integrity of the institution.”

He thanked his Board of Governors, saying that members had given unstinting support, without which the institution’s achievements would not have been possible.

And, finally, yet another piece of major news that Thursday night’s audience heard: This graduation may mark the last at this time of year and at the UCCI auditorium. The board has given its permission to stage future graduations outdoors in the UCCI quadrangle, and in the fall (possibly during a Saturday morning or afternoon).

****END OF RELEASE****

The University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) is an institution of higher learning that contributes to Caymanian society by advancing knowledge and developing creative graduates through our cultural, social, economic and environmental activities. UCCI offers a number of certificate programmes, associate and degree courses as well as graduate programmes and professional trainings. Visit www.ucci.edu.ky to learn more.

