

**The Role of Academia in National Development: Making our Vision
2030 a Reality**

**Wayne Henry, Chairman and Director General, Planning Institute
of Jamaica**

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Salutations

Principal of the University of the West Indies, Professor Dale Webber,
...Prof Denise Eldemire Shearer, Head of Graduate Studies and
Research, Chair of UWI Research Days, members of academia,
colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Board (some of whom are members of the UWI family), management and staff of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), I extend heartiest congratulations to the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona on another year of hosting its Research Days – and we congratulate you on this your 20th year of hosting this event and showcasing the work of the university, your products and other offerings – and importantly your partnering with other stakeholders to showcase their work. The cutting-edge research being undertaken here at the UWI provides solutions for local, regional and international issues and influences global development. We are especially pleased that this year you have partnered with the PIOJ, and in particular, Vision 2030 Jamaica. It is evident that you understand the invaluable and unique role

that you play in advancing the development prospects of our country. As a regional university, you are also able to position yourself to share our best practice and lessons learnt from our development pathway.

So let me begin by reiterating my topic today – “The Role of Academia in National Development: Making our Vision 2030 a Reality”.

You would have heard briefly from the previous speaker that Vision 2030 Jamaica is our country’s first long-term national development plan. We are in the 10th year of the implementation of this 21-year Plan – Vision 2030 Jamaica. Put another way, it is Jamaica’s framework for achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth that engages all Jamaicans whether at home or abroad in the national development process and provides all with equitable opportunities to benefit from the fruits of our labour and outcomes of development. You have been apprised of the main features and goals of Vision 2030 Jamaica and I will further the conversation by speaking to our role in making this vision a reality, and particularly the unique role that academia occupies in creating the conditions necessary for us to successfully implement the strategic roadmap that it helped to create in Vision 2030 Jamaica, towards the achievement of our 2030 goals, and more importantly the Jamaica we want, a Jamaica where we ‘leave no one behind’.

The role that academia has in the advancement and achievement of national development and more so sustainable national development is indisputable.

According to Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the United Nations “Sustainable Development is the pathway to the future we want for all. It offers a framework to generate economic growth, achieve social justice, exercise environmental stewardship and strengthen governance.”¹

Academia plays a central role in this regard by:

- informing the ideologies, development paradigms and values that we pursue as a nation
- providing multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional expertise in a wide range of areas critical for nation building
- increasing the stock of knowledge
- supporting evidenced-based decision making
- supporting the development of our human capital through the provision of higher level education and through its scholarship and pragmatic endeavours, which inform the content and modes of delivery from the early childhood to secondary and post-secondary levels of education

¹ <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/development>

So what lessons have we learnt as institutions and as a people to ensure that we fully engage the offerings and potential of academia in securing a better Jamaica; a more prosperous Caribbean and a better world for all?

From a global historical context, the engagement of academia in efforts towards national development is long established and can be readily traced to the origins of modern systems of government, the writings of ancient philosophers, and the advancement of rationalism and science as the approach to explaining and understanding society to achieve orderly development. The ideas, research, discoveries, writings and social critiques of academia laid the foundations for the establishment of modern democracy and participatory governance, economic and trade ideologies, social organization and organizational models such as bureaucracy, and the strategic underpinnings of achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Academia, including faculty and students, has played an indispensable role in providing knowledge-based and revolutionary fuel in advancing the development of independent nation states – working with the political directorate, government, private sector, civil society and citizenry in articulating and defining questions and answers about identity, self-governance, models for social and economic development and visions for the future. The movement towards “Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom” a phrase I have borrowed from the

title of one of the works of Caribbean scholar, Lloyd Best, represents the influences of Caribbean academia in determining and manifesting what it means to be Caribbean as we own the lessons from our past in charting the future. This has been the Jamaican experience, as it is within this context that the Central Planning Agency, now the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), was established in 1955 as part of developing the institutional framework to drive Jamaica's development.

Throughout its history, the PIOJ has pursued a mandate of informing and advancing the development of policies and plans of government through research, and statistical and other analyses. These have been manifested in theories of change and statistical and applied models for development, and their translation into development programmes and projects that are strategically aligned with global, regional, national and local realities.

The demands on and requirements of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and the wider state apparatus has transitioned and evolved over time. This evolution has been informed by the development needs of the Jamaican people and rapidly changing global realities and technological and scientific advancements, which have required adaptations of key institutions to effectively function and compete in an increasingly globalized world.

In 2006, the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) mandated the PIOJ to lead the process of developing a long-term national development plan to advance the country's development prospects in the social, economic and environmental spheres – a mandate that is aligned to the PIOJ Act which directs the agency to provide the country with strategic direction with respect to long term development planning.

This plan development process, underpinned by high levels of stakeholder engagement and an intense planning period over two years, led to the formulation of the country's first long-term national development plan – Vision 2030 Jamaica. The Plan provides a roadmap to achieve sustainable prosperity for all Jamaicans by 2030. It is designed to transform Jamaica from a middle-income developing country to one which: affords our citizens a high quality of life and world-class standards in critical areas such as education, health-care, access to environmental goods and services; and integrates and balances economic, social and environmental issues; and is underpinned by good governance.

Academia played a pivotal role in shaping this 21-year strategic roadmap and our country's long term national goals and vision; and continues to serve as a key partner in the Plan Implementation Process. In the Plan Development Phase, these contributions included: collaborations within stakeholder-driven Task Forces in providing the evidence-based underpinnings and technical expertise in the formulation

of the strategic framework for the development of sectors consistent with the 4 goals and 15 national outcomes – leading to the production of 31 Sector Plans. Also, academia contributed to the development of the National Outcome Indicator Framework, which facilitates objective measurement of development results and comprises high level outcome/impact indicators across the 15 National Outcomes, and regionally and globally benchmarked targets.

As we implement Vision 2030 Jamaica, academia has contributed evidence-based research data, and statistics on social, economic and environmental development performance, regional and global trends; and knowledge-based and other tools for continuous improvement of the plan implementation process, building on success and addressing gaps.

The University of the West Indies has been our closest partner in academia in the building of the institutional framework for Vision 2030 Jamaica, and specifically the multi-stakeholder Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of plan implementation. Members of academia, and primarily the UWI, form part of the membership of our TWGs; and I take this opportunity to highlight that the Vice-Chair of the TWG for Governance Dr. Eris Schoburgh is a sitting lecturer in the Department of Government; the co-chairs for the Science, Technology and Innovation TWG, Professors Ishenkumba Kahwa and Errol Morrison are active members of the UWI community, who led the TWG last year to produce the draft national STI

policy; and Professor Denise Eldemire-Shearer, who needs no introduction, serves as the chair of the Health Research Sub-Committee of the Health TWG – the Sub-Committee is mandated to develop a 10-year Survey Plan for health aligned with the National Health Research Agenda; the committee is also pursuing the establishment of a Central Repository of Health Research.

The role of academia in the pursuit of sustainable national development is not only linked to the plan of the day. The academic community, driven by a sense of duty, a commitment to advancing the knowledge base and development of human capital has and continues to provide world class, accredited higher education programmes to Jamaica, the region and the globe. This relentless pursuit of excellence was recognized just recently as the UWI was ranked in the top 5 per cent among the world’s top institutions by the 2019 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. This ranking is not surprising since academia has played a central role in the development, explanation and application of knowledge and research in advancing Jamaica’s and the Caribbean’s development and facilitating Jamaica’s rise as a critical development partner in the regional and global arenas. Academia provides access to a vast storehouse of knowledge through its global community of faculty and learners; and leads in the development of scholarship, knowledge-sharing, providing consultancy services in research, policy development and other national development related

endeavours. It also lends expertise through engagement in stakeholder consultative processes.

We see tangible representations of this in the following, which are but a few examples of the direct contribution of academia to the achievement of Vision 2030 Jamaica and national development through research and the provision of technical expertise:

1. Academia contributes to the development of each Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) in identifying the strategic priorities that should be pursued in each successive 3-year period from 2009 to 2030 to advance the achievement of our 2030 goals. Academia also plays a central role in the development of policies and programmes that are aligned to Vision 2030 Jamaica to advance the achievement of the National Outcomes and/or specific strategic imperatives associated with the Outcomes.
2. In 2017, a multi-disciplinary team led by Prof. Aldrie Henry-Lee and Dr Arlene Bailey – Principal and Co-Principal Investigators prepared the country’s first Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Country Report. The team also contributed to the development and delivery of the country’s first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018.
3. The State of the Jamaica Climate Report 2015, which provides a concise overview of data and information on Jamaica’s climate.

The report was jointly prepared by the PIOJ under the Pilot Programme on Climate Resilience (PPCR)/Improving Climate Data and Information Management Project (ICDIMP), and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Climate Studies Group. It builds on the core data in the previous report (2012), and is a first reference point with respect to parameters such as rainfall, temperature, sea level rise and solar radiation – important for all the work being undertaken in climate proofing our sectors.

4. The Growth Inducement Strategy for Jamaica in the Short and Medium Term (2011) which was prepared by a team led by former Director General of the PIOJ, Dr Gladstone Hutchinson and a member of academia himself, along with Lead Consultant, Donald J. Harris, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Stanford University. An assessment of the implementation and impact of this growth inducement strategy was completed in 2018 by Professor David Tennant of the UWI.

Academic work has influenced:

- the legislative ban on single-use plastics, which is owing to our understanding of the effects of plastic pollution on our environment, economy and society and our responsibility to safeguard our people and fulfil our obligations under global agreements;

And

- the acclaimed Jamaica Moves Programme, which responds to data and statistics showing the consistent increase in the rate of non-communicable diseases within our society and the associated risk factors

We also see tangible representations of academic influences in other areas. For example, in our focus on job creation – a key tenet of our growth strategy – which demonstrates recognition that we are at a stage in our demographic transition where we have a large working age population, decreasing child population and increasing elderly population, and are therefore required to implement strategies to engage the citizenry in meaningful and sustainable income-earning and employment, to reap the potential dividend from a large working age population.

Importantly, the knowledge and theory-based underpinning of the offerings of our tertiary level institutions have produced graduates with the capacity to engage research, theory and applied knowledge to produce models, and pragmatic tools for development. Many of the graduates of the UWI, and other local tertiary institutions have made indelible marks in Jamaica's government service and advancing Jamaica's development in their efforts at home and also abroad. The PIOJ is proud to have many of these graduates among our staff.

With a strong academic community playing an integral role in nation building, it is not surprising that Jamaica has been recognized as a leader in the region and among small island developing states (SIDS) in key areas such as

1. national development planning, marked by our Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, which is a recognized regional and global best practice;
2. high level of alignment of Vision 2030 Jamaica with the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, and commitment to the wider Post-2015 Development Agenda, which includes the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development;
3. advancing the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway
4. official statistics led by the work of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica in which according to the World Bank, Jamaica enjoys a fairly high level of statistical capacity – about 77.8 out of 100 – with 100 being the highest - on par with Latin America and the Caribbean and well above average for small island Caribbean states which is at 69.5.
5. advancing replicable models for social, cultural, economic, environmental and sectoral development.

It is evident that we have achieved at a minimum, commendable progress in developing and operationalizing our Vision 2030 Jamaica, tangibly demonstrating what Jamaica has to offer in advancing the development agenda of our region and global community; and advancing Jamaica's nation brand.

But what more is needed to ensure that we achieve our Vision 2030 Jamaica and the goals and national outcomes therein, and what specific collaborations and contributions are required of academia?

- We require access to a repository of scholarly work and the outputs of continuous knowledge construction produced by academia to: inform the strengthening of strategic frameworks to advance sustainable development and inclusive growth, equity, effective governance and transformational leadership; drive the development of an economy that relies on the higher forms of capital – cultural, human, knowledge and institutional; and develop consensus on and institutionalization of core and transformational values.
- We require that your academic programmes (education and training) make available competencies and technical expertise in our human resource to meet our development needs.
- Academia has a recognized duty to advance scholarship and expand the knowledge base while critically examining the functions of our institutions, including government, for both explanatory and prescriptive purposes. Academia is critical to the

processes of innovation, discovery and creation – it is academia that has historically helped us see things differently as we expand our understanding of the planet and solutions to advance our sustainability.

Also, I will like to highlight a few areas of work to advance our development that requires the continued involvement of academia.

1. Jamaica is in the process of establishing a coordinated National Statistics System (NSS) as there are significant gaps in the quality of data available to inform and monitor and evaluate national and local level development – specifically Vision 2030 Jamaica, the SDG Global Indicators and Local Level Sustainable Development Plans. We face several challenges, including: the timely production of statistics and statistical reports, effectively engaging technology to improve data collection, processing, analysis and management, mining and archiving; inadequate data and statistical capacity in most sectors; and inadequate data literacy in the populace. We need your support here!
2. The alignment of education and training with our labour market and development needs has been and continues to be a strategic priority with recognizable gaps to address. While Jamaica is pursuing an aggressive programme” of upskilling and certifying the population, including improving the quality of teacher education and access to education and training at all levels, we are

at present challenged by resource constraints, gaps in capacity, high levels of migration and insufficient incentives being given to the labour force – we need you to work with us here...

3. As we work towards ensuring that our industry structures such as tourism, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction etc, become internationally competitive, your research here is paramount to meeting our development needs – in such areas as cleaner technologies, energy efficiency and conservation (and here we applaud the UWI Net Zero Energy Building – the 1st in the Caribbean and a prototype for SIDS) , climate change adaptation, infrastructural development, sustainable consumption and production and the green and blue economies among others.
4. Working with us to better communicate Vision 2030 Jamaica and the role that both academia and the wider society must play in achieving the Jamaica we want. I will pause here to applaud UWI and your foresight in focussing this 20th staging of UWI research days on Vision 2030 Jamaica.
5. We need your help in defining evidence-based strategies and models to address our many development challenges that remain – be it in the areas of education and training, productivity crime or social cohesion

How do we move forward? Let me share with you some proposed prescriptions

1. The PIOJ commits to strengthening its partner framework and will increase its efforts to engage our academic institutions in strategic partnerships and strengthen those already existing in our TWGs and under special initiatives such as engaging Graduates Students of SALISES in monitoring and evaluation.
2. The PIOJ further commits to champion the continued support of academic enquiry, knowledge construction and research towards the promotion and institutionalization of a culture of evidence-based decision making in national development planning. Let us work together to develop the national research agenda to achieve the Jamaica we want and to enable us to reach an innovation driven stage of development
3. Let us consider a joint UWI-PIOJ Memorandum of Understanding which would among other things allow us to prepare a joint research agenda with key focal areas aligned to the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, and a timeline for the implementation of the research agenda; seek joint funding for the implementation of the research agenda; and utilize existing international, regional and national networks to access funding and specialist skills for its implementation;

4. Let us explore an exchange or peer-to-peer learning programme – where academia – your lecturers works with us at the PIOJ through internships and mentorships for say 3 to 6 months on policy and development planning and understanding government processes and procedures; and let our technical experts come to you for 3 to 6 months and join the ranks of lecturers and through courses and seminars share our vast technical expertise and experience in policy development and planning with students. I believe this sort of learning is critical in this new development pathway and will build institutional and technical capacity in both organizations. Such an initiative will expand and strengthen the current relationship that we have with the Department of Economics, whereby in some years we are invited to engage masters level students in an internship to fulfil part of the Masters programme in Economics.
5. We urge academia and the citizenry to support state efforts towards improving our information systems and attempts to understand the state of the nation and its people to inform how we target and apply our resources in promotion of sustainability and inclusion. This requires us to be enquiring and critical, and or academia to support the development of these skills in students and the broader community, including the educational curricula from the early childhood to the secondary and post-secondary levels towards

engaging state systems for the management of data and service delivery; and providing the data that inform the statistics on our population and living conditions, and social, economic and environmental development, including the state of housing and security of tenure; education and training, our industries, employment, the labour market and productivity, rural and urban infrastructure, and the environment.

6. We challenge academia and our students, in particular to develop relevant methodologies and technology-based tools for engaging informatics, and “big data”, statistical programming and other elements of data science within the context of small island developing states (SIDS),

Our most recent development results show improvements in various aspects of development – human capital, social protection and inclusion, economic stability, growth and employment, public sector efficiency and effectiveness among others... we thank the UWI and academia in general for working with us and all stakeholders in advancing the Jamaica we want. Let us remember the words of anthropologist Margaret Meade- herself a member of academia – “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has” ...let us be that small group.

Jamaica is on the path to a sustainable future and let us all continue to work together to make “Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business.”

Thank You...