

UTech, Jamaica Signs MoU with GoJ for 1000 STEM Scholarships to build out the Knowledge Process Outsourcing Industry

UTech, Jamaica Broadcaster

Fri 07/07/2023 08:00 AM



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Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, Minister of Finance and the Public Service, (seated centre) Professor Haldane Johnson (seated left), Acting Deputy President, University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Jamaica) and Ms. Nickiesha Walsh, Executive Director, Students' Loan Bureau affix their signatures on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among the three institutions for the implementation of the Government of Jamaica's 1000 STEM Scholarships valued at \$2.4 billion over the next five cohort of new undergraduate students in need who meet the matriculation requirements for STEM courses of study offered by the Faculty of Engineering and Computing at UTech, Jamaica.

Witnessing the historic signing (standing from left) are Mr. Lloyd Carney, Chancellor, UTech, Jamaica, Hon. Marsha Smith, Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Youth and Professor Sean Thrope, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Computing, UTech, Jamaica. The MoU was signed at a special ceremony held Thursday, July 6, 2023, at the Jamaica Pegasus hotel in Kingston.

University of Technology, Jamaica on Thursday, July 6, 2023, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Jamaica through its Ministry of Finance and the Public Service and the Students' Loan Bureau (SLB) for the implementation of 1,000 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) scholarships valued at \$2.4 B. The needs-based STEM scholarship is geared towards providing support to new undergraduate students of the University's Faculty of Engineering and Computing over the next five years who are in financial need and who meet the matriculation requirements.



Dr. The Hon. Nigel Clare, Minister of Finance and the Public Service speaking at the launch ceremony and signing of an MoU for 1000 STEM scholarships for UTech, Jamaica students on Thursday, July 6, 2023, at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, Kingston.

Speaking at the launch and signing ceremony, Dr. The Honourable Nigel Clarke stated that the support being provided to UTech, Jamaica through the government's STEM scholarship programme must be viewed within the context of Jamaica being a "small, open economy that has an inextricable, independent link with the outside world," adding that "because we are an open economy, we have to always be concerned with our ability to trade with the outside world and to earn foreign exchange."

Pointing out that in Jamaica's relatively small economic base, only five industries routinely earn over \$200M per year in foreign exchange – tourism, business process outsourcing, mining and quarrying, food and beverages and refined petroleum, the Minister underscored the need for more diversified industries that can generate more foreign exchange.

In this context, Dr. Clarke asserted that Jamaica has educational institutions like UTech, Jamaica with the capacity to produce sufficient numbers of persons for the tremendous opportunity provided by the knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) sector which can potentially earn Jamaica billions in foreign exchange. The Minister explained that this significant KPO opportunity exist in the information technology business enabled services that deliver services such as data analytics through machine learning, Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, data security and other related emerging fields.

“These can be delivered remotely,” Dr. Clarke noted, adding that “All that we need are sufficient numbers of Jamaicans on island who have the skills on which these services are built.” Dr. Clarke further emphasized that “the Government is serious about taking advantage of this opportunity that Jamaica has, and it is for this reason why we are making a concerted effort to support the production of qualified, trained and skilled graduates in STEM areas generally and in particular, in the emerging subsectors of computer science.”

Continuing the Minister said, “We are doing this with UTech under the leadership of Lloyd Carney who has a vision for what UTech can become and for what Jamaica can become with UTech optimizing on the opportunities,” Dr. Clarke added, “I am happy that there is a keen alignment between the vision of the Chancellor and the direction of the government with respect to the prioritization of STEM and related ideas, further stating that UTech, Jamaica “ is one of the leading sources of job-ready science, engineering, computing and technology graduates for the workforce, and has been doing that for a long time.”

Commenting on the “Business Case Proposal for STEM Computer Science Scholarship” submitted earlier this year to the Ministry by UTech, Jamaica, Dr. Clarke noted that “we received a great proposal from UTech and we are acting on it.”



Professor Haldane Johnson Acting Deputy President, University of Technology, Jamaica brings remarks at the launch and the signing of a MoU for 1000 STEM scholarships for UTech, Jamaica students on Thursday, July 6, 2023, at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, Kingston.

In his address, Prof. Haldane Johnson, Acting Deputy President, UTech, Jamaica, characterised the collaboration between the University and the two government entities as a “win-win model for

Jamaica's development," noting that the initiative aligns well with the University's mission, **"to positively impact Jamaica and the wider Caribbean through high quality learning opportunities, research and value-added solutions to government, industry and communities."**

Prof. Johnson noted that student beneficiaries of the STEM scholarships will have the opportunity to choose from 13 programmes offered by the Faculty of Engineering and Computing in Computer Science, Computer Network and Security, Animation Production and Development, Computer Information Systems, Gaming, Applied Artificial Intelligence, Mechanical/Electrical/Civil /Chemical/Industrial engineering.

Pointing out that "UTech, Jamaica offers a comprehensive multidisciplinary variety of over 100 courses of study in Computing and Information Technology, Engineering, Science, Business, Health, Hospitality, Education, the Built Environment, Sports, Law and Liberal Arts, 70% of which are in STEM", Prof. Johnson shared that "The University is vested in ensuring that all our graduates are well-rounded and fully prepared not only with competence and know-how in their chosen field of study, but the learning environment also seeks to develop soft skills needed in today's competitive job market." He noted further that "In addition to the academic rigor of all courses of study and the hands-on, practical approach to learning; there is also the infusion of critical thinking, entrepreneurship and innovation into the curricula across colleges and faculties."

Prof. Johnson also shared that the University has commenced its recruitment drive of the targeted 17-25 age cohort who meet the matriculation requirements as well as the financial need and community service criteria.

Director, Talent and Knowledge Management at the Ministry of Finance, Ms. Colette Cummings-McCausland in her remarks gave an overview of the STEM scholarship programme and explained that programme is in alignment with the Government's priorities "leading to an overall human capital development and a national goal of empowering Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential."

Executive Director, SLB, Ms. Nickeisha Walsh, in her presentation stated that "We will include a mechanism to ensure that scholarship recipients commit to adequate time working in Jamaica and contributing to national development." She added that the SLB is pleased to be collaborating with UTech, Jamaica noting that "as we transition our economy to boost Jamaica's capacity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, a robust STEM programme will play a significant role in this chapter of our nation's history." She further pointed out that the partnership along with the accompanying objectives is a "step in the right direction" for Jamaica.

Scholarship applicants may visit the UTech, Jamaica website at www.utechjamaica.edu.jm. Applicants may also email prospectinfo@utech.edu.jm or call (876) 970-5077 for more details.

***By Corporate Communications Unit
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Watch the launch ceremony, MOFPS YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iqqhn9Jo8>



Government of Jamaica STEM Scholarship Launch

The MOFPS STEM Scholarship programme is geared at assisting some 1,000 students over the next five years at a total cost of \$2.4 billion. These STEM scholarships will be used to support Jamaicans from low-income households. The programme was formed

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