

FENC Partners with Jamaica Private Power Company to Establish Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations at UTech, Jamaica Campuses

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(L-R) Professor Sean Thorpe, Dean Faculty of Engineering and Computing, Dr. Wayne Mckenzie, Chief Executive Officer, Jamaica Private Power Company, share in a handshake signalling their agreement for a new community service partnership for the deployment of Electric Vehicle charging stations at the University of Technology Jamaica Campuses for the academic year 2023/24.

The inaugural Electric Vehicle (EV) Symposium, held on Monday, July 31, 2023, was spearheaded by a team led by the Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Computing (FENC), Professor Sean Thorpe, established to look at sustainable transportation amidst the world's

cry to have a net zero carbon emissions programme in place by the year 2050 under the Paris agreement given the worlds' adverse climates we now face.

One of Jamaica's responses under the support of this net zero carbon emissions programme, is the move by the Government to launch its Electric Vehicle (EV) draft policy released in June 2023 of this year.

While the provision of the EV draft policy significantly highlights the need for import standards, regulation and control for the adoption of EVs in the marketplace, the symposium sought to highlight the critical question and analysis of:

- Jamaica's readiness with respect to the Energy grid charging and infrastructure for supporting EVs.
- The costing implications.
- The need for change in driver behaviour as a part of new culture norms required.
- The preparation of the teaching and learning curriculum both at the secondary and tertiary level that supports the training, research, and certification of Engineers as well as the driving public.

The symposium featured speakers from the Jamaica Public Service Company, Bureau of Standards Jamaica, Island traffic Authority, Jamaica Air Quality Control and Pollution Company, the Jamaica Private Power Company, and our own academic team within Electrical and Computer Engineering, as well as the Industrial and Mechanical Engineering programmes. There were over eighty (80) people in attendance both in person and online.

Professor Thorpe noted that "the EV symposium represents a part of our yearlong successful series of workshop presentations by the FENC under the need to prepare the Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) workforce. We started with the Cyber-Security and Data Protection symposium in March 2023, followed by the Civil Engineering symposium on earthquake resilience and now EVs. I would like to the team within the Electrical and Computer Engineering programme and the Industrial and Mechanical Engineering programmes respectively led by lecturers Mr. Darron Fraser, Dr. Milton Richardson, Mrs. Carolyn Ferguson-Arnold, Mr. Noel Sinclair, Dr. Balvin Thorpe, Dr. Damian Graham, and Mr. Hugh Cargill and all the administrators worked to produce this timely and expedient outcome."

Professor Thorpe continued, "Arising from the event, Dr. Wayne McKenzie, CEO of Jamaica Private Power Company, has agreed under a new community service agreement, to provide charging stations to the University campuses. This will require a situational analysis as part of these efforts which will get under way shortly. Important to these outcomes, the charging stations will serve primarily for research use where consumer studies on the use of the charging stations will be done as one of our first initiatives. We will seek to have these charging stations in place within the current academic year."

While the EV symposium featured timely keynote address, panel discussions, case studies and a wealth of opportunities for partnership networking in academia as part of public-

private sector engagements, the event also marked the historic first for the launch of the FENC's new EV research laboratory led by Lecturer Mr. Darron Fraser from within the Electrical and Computer Engineering programme.



(L-R) Team Members of the FENC Electric Vehicle Research Laboratory working group, commissioned on July 31, 2023, at the Electric Vehicle Charging and Infrastructure Symposium, held at LT50, Shared Facility building, University of Technology, Jamaica, Papine Campus.

Professor Thorpe further explains that the EV symposium was a call to action for the University to support looking at the research directions and the promise that EVs have to the Jamaican public.

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He noted that “Consistent with the provisions under the EV draft policy released in June of this year, our new research laboratory working group is geared at providing:

- (i) Public awareness on the state of EV and its future.
- (ii) Curriculum Training and certification to support the applied skillsets of graduates as a part of a national workforce development to drive the EV automotive revolution in Jamaica.
- (iii) Research and innovation – through the conduct of simulated case studies that support both understanding and the provision of cutting-edge technical solutions for the EV product and services market.”

Concluding, Professor Thorpe stated that “The EV market globally has been growing as the world races to cut the Carbon emissions footprint on the planet that is now adversely affected by changing climate behavior never seen before and Jamaica has a vital role to play in this effort. More specifically the University of Technology as a key stakeholder in terms of the Education sector within this country has pivotal role to play towards this end.”

He added that “The EV marketplace represents another significant element of the national Digital transformation programme. Observing where the global market on EVs has grown since 2012 with 120,000, to over 16.5 million EVs now in 2023, suggests that the market is well positioned for continued dramatic growth over the next decade. Here in Jamaica, we have over some 2000 EVs already on our roads in the form of cars, buses, trucks, and scooters and an increasing occurrence charging stations now becoming proliferated. We cannot afford not to be proactive if we are going to be a part of driving this technology change as a university.”

Faculty of Engineering and Computing (FENC)/FENC Electric Vehicle Research Laboratory