

# ACTT NOW

A Publication of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago

A Project of the Office of The Executive Director

## WHO WE ARE

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established by the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as "the principal body in Trinidad and Tobago for conducting and advising on the accreditation and recognition of post secondary and tertiary educational and training institutions, programmes and awards, whether local or foreign, and for the promotion of the quality and standards of post secondary and tertiary education and training in Trinidad and Tobago" (Section 8 (1), Act No. 16 of 2004).

ACTT is a full member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE).

## WHAT WE DO

Primary services offered by ACTT are:

- Registration of post secondary and tertiary institutions and providers
- Accreditation of institutions and programmes
- Recognition of foreign qualifications
- Conferment of institutional title
- Quality enhancement support for institutions and providers

For a full list of our functions you can find a copy of the Act at:

[www.actt.org.tt](http://www.actt.org.tt)



**Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne**  
Executive Director, ACTT

## REGISTERED INSTITUTIONS

These institutions have been evaluated against the criteria set by ACTT and have provided evidence of their compliance with those standards. They are now registered and have been placed on the National Register of post secondary and tertiary institutions maintained by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI)

Caribbean Nazarene College

Purchasing Supply and Management Tuition Service Ltd.

The Institute of Medical Education

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT)

SET, Ready and Go Ltd.

School of Business and Computer Science (SBCS)

Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business

Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies

SITAL College of Tertiary Education

University of the Southern Caribbean (USC)

OSHA Services, LLC

UWI School of Business and Applied Studies (ROYTEC)

The University of the West Indies (UWI)

Professional Institute of Marketing and Business Studies (PIMBS)

College of Science Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT)

Academy of Tertiary Studies (ATS)

## UTT, COSTAATT, THTI and Cipriani College Registered by ACTT

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT), the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (THTI), Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies (CCLCS) and the Academy of Tertiary Studies are the most recent institutions to be registered by ACTT. These institutions are among almost seventy higher education institutions and providers that have either been registered or are in the process of being registered by ACTT. Registration is the first step for institutions in the new national quality assurance system. Following this initial step, registered institutions become eligible for accreditation.

Act No. 16 of 2004 mandates all institutions operating in Trinidad and Tobago to be registered by ACTT. The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago,

cognizant of the rigorous demands of the registration process, created a transitional period to enable institutions already established to become fully integrated into the national quality assurance system. The transitional period allowed for institutions that were established at the time that the Act came into force to continue to operate legally while seeking registration. While the Act provided a transitional period for established institutions, any institution that opened its doors after July 8th 2004, without first registering with ACTT, is operating illegally. The fine for operating a post secondary or tertiary institution without registration is \$20,000.00 plus \$500.00 for each day the institution maintains its operations. The current transitional period expires on July 8th 2008 and members of the public should be guided by this when choosing tertiary level programmes.

## ACTT Supports Institutional Development

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago currently presides over what is arguably the most comprehensive quality assurance system for tertiary education in the English-speaking Caribbean. The system is founded on three pillars:

- 1) Registration
- 2) Accreditation
- 3) Quality Enhancement

Registration is compulsory and institutions can be registered for one, two or three years depending on the strength and maturity of their quality management system (QMS). Registered institutions must submit annual reports to ACTT and are continuously monitored to ensure that standards are maintained. Institutions must seek re-registration approximately six months prior to the expiration of their registered status.

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# Conversations on Registration

*In an interview with Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director, ACTT, Dr. Anthony Bowrin, ROYTEC's Executive Director speaks out on his institution's registration, their plans for the future and developments in the tertiary education sector in Trinidad and Tobago.*

**Dr. Alleyne:** What does it mean to be one of the first TLIs to be registered in T&T?

**Dr. Bowrin:** We are quite happy and the entire staff is very, very proud. With all of the work that they had put in, when I walked around and told them the news that I had just received the call that we are registered ... we're number three, everyone was delighted. We see it as a major achievement. The Board was equally pleased since they are committed to the challenge of continuously improving the standards of the institution.

**Dr. Alleyne:** What would you say were some of the challenges you overcame during the registration process?

**Dr. Bowrin:** As the leader of the organisation, I had to manage the change process that the institute was engaged in, and the establishment of ACTT and the initiatives of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education at that time proved to be a good stimulus for the kind of development that needed to take place within the institute. It gave us a focus on quality improvement in a structured and systematic way. A major challenge was documenting our policies, processes and procedures. A lot of good things were being done but the documentation wasn't there. Another challenge was getting people to embrace a culture of self-evaluation and to be more critical about the things we do. Getting employees to take feedback in the right spirit, for example, was a challenge. So there was a need to develop the kind of academic environment in which there was an appreciation for institutional self-evaluation as a part of the quality improvement process.

**Dr. Alleyne:** What are the real benefits of registration to your institution?

**Dr. Bowrin:** It was a significant achievement to become the third institution in the country to be registered by ACTT. We see registration as a quality symbol that communicates credibility to members of the public. Our registration also provides students with the assurance of our quality. I believe that essentially it raises the bar because we have to continue to improve on what we do to maintain our registration.

**Dr. Alleyne:** Can you identify some of the major cost items that the institution incurred during the registration process?

**Dr. Bowrin:** The direct cost of the exercise was minimal. Most of our costs were as a result of upgrading the facilities such as the library, the information technology, the internet connectivity and also the research effort to support the development of the documentation. Having to meet the standards for registration actually helped us to accelerate the pace of the facilities upgrade.

**Dr. Alleyne:** Do you view the mandatory registration process as largely one that results in compliance with minimum standards or does it also promote continuous quality improvement?

**Dr. Bowrin:** Compulsory registration sets a benchmark for all institutions in the sector and provides the public with a guarantee that all institutions have been evaluated and have met ACTT's standards. No doubt there would have been a lot of poor quality before ACTT was established and there was no real mechanism for monitoring quality. The level of monitoring by ACTT is critical to continuous quality improvement. If institutions are just registered and then left on their own with no mechanism for ensuring that the standards are being maintained, then the sort of continuous improvement that the institutions should be engaged in may not take place. If institutions take the registration process seriously then it changes the way they do things. While it may initially be about the desire to meet the standards, during the process institutions develop internal quality assurance systems that must be maintained.

**Dr. Alleyne:** What can students expect as a result of the developments that have taken place in your institution during the registration process?

**Dr. Bowrin:** During the process the institution grew. Our contracts with our students are more closely monitored. Our courses are more closely aligned to student learning outcomes. We engage our students more than we did before. We better understand their expectations and ensure that we are addressing their needs. They benefit from all of the improvements in the institution but, more importantly, it is the recognition that registration brings to the institution and the qualifications that our students earn that really matters to them. The outcome of all of this is that our quality has improved and we are more consistently reaching our goals.

**Dr. Alleyne:** There have been a number of government initiatives over the past eight years that have been aimed at increasing participation in tertiary education. How have these initiatives impacted on your institution and on the sector as a whole?

**Dr. Bowrin:** On the financial side, several of the initiatives have made



Dr. Anthony Bowrin  
Executive Director, ROYTEC.

access to tertiary education easier for students. It's more affordable and that's good. As a consequence however, the student population is now more diverse. This introduces new challenges for institutions. I believe there needs to be early assessment of students' competencies in order to ensure that you can serve their needs. While we are accepting a greater number of students we also want them to succeed. We need to introduce more pre-college courses, particularly Math. We also need to introduce more tutorial classes to support student learning.

**Dr. Alleyne:** As a registered institution, what is the next step for you?

**Dr. Bowrin:** Accreditation. That's the next step. We are working towards putting things in place before beginning the process because we realize that this will be a major undertaking and we want to be well prepared when we start the process. Our goal is to be the number one undergraduate business school in Trinidad and Tobago either on our own or in partnership with the department of management at UWI. We want to offer students something that differentiates us from the rest of the sector. We hope to offer a lot more programmes by distance mode. Our Bachelor of Education programme is currently offered online and we hope to increase our online offerings.

**Dr. Alleyne:** ROYTEC has collaborated with several foreign institutions to offer transnational programmes locally, to what extent have these programmes been tailored to local needs?

**Dr. Bowrin:** We are currently engaged in adapting the content of our programmes to ensure that they are more relevant to Trinidad and Tobago. In our Bachelor of Education programme, for example, with University of New Brunswick, there is a course on Canadian Law that was replaced by a course on Trinidad and Tobago Law. We have always integrated local material, such as case studies, without diluting the content or diminishing the value of the course. We also offer our own Associate degrees. They have been benchmarked against the



L-R: Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director, ACTT, in discussion with Dr. Anthony Bowrin, Executive Director, ROYTEC.

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## CONVERSATIONS ON REGISTRATION

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standards for similar degrees in Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the region as well as against the North American degrees. In addition, we have customised some of the programmes of the American Management Association (AMA) to meet local needs. We hope to start working towards our own Bachelor's degrees now, particularly as we partner more closely with UWI.

**Dr. Alleyne:** *What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing the local tertiary education sector in relation to improving quality?*

**Dr. Bowrin:** We need to fix primary and secondary level education. Tertiary institutions have to do too much work at the remedial level because many of the students are not adequately prepared for tertiary education when they leave school. Schools must provide a better grounding in Math, English and Basic Science as the foundation for learning. We also need more competent teachers who are better prepared for the modern classroom. This raises questions about why people teach, how we prepare them, attitudes to work, work ethics etc. I think we have a problem at the national level with our work culture and this is reflected in the education system as well. We need to provide more opportunities for students to excel and we have to recognise and reward excellence. While we don't want a system that is elitist, I believe that in some ways we encourage mediocrity by not challenging our best and our brightest to excel. There is probably too much emphasis on testing and not enough on facilitating learning.

**Dr. Alleyne:** *What are your views on the increasing phenomenon of private, for-profit institutions operating in the sector and the impact on quality?*

**Dr. Bowrin:** From a business perspective, I think that state-owned institutions demonstrate a greater capacity for inefficiency. The expectations for maintaining standards and for high levels of accountability are greater in the private sector. The private sector institutions have to generate their own funds so their survival is based on relevance, quality and accountability. This allows us to be more responsive to market demands and student demands. With ACTT playing a regulatory role and monitoring quality, and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education as a gatekeeper, there shouldn't be any more concern about the impact of the private institutions than there is about the state-owned ones.

**Dr. Alleyne:** *What role do you see the ACTT playing in the tertiary education sector in this country in the future?*

**Dr. Bowrin:** A very critical role. ACTT must set the benchmarks - the minimum standards for institutions in the sector. It must establish and disseminate best practice. The role of ACTT as a regulator is important. The Council must exercise its legitimate authority to rid the sector of poor quality even if that makes it unpopular. Popularity is not an issue.

**Dr. Alleyne:** *Do you have any final words?*

**Dr. Bowrin:** I would like to say that we welcome the establishment of ACTT. You have made all of the players in the sector take a second look at what we do. The change that this is bringing about and the awareness it has created is invaluable.

### CANDIDATES FOR REGISTRATION

These institutions have applied for registration and their applications have been reviewed for completeness and accepted:

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|---|
| Omardeen School of Accountancy Limited                                |
| PAL Institute of Health, Safety and Environmental Services Limited    |
| Upper Level Educational Institute Limited (ULEI)                      |
| College of Legal Studies Limited                                      |
| West Indies School of Theology (WIST)                                 |
| Advanced Human-Development Associates (AHA)                           |
| Douglas Associates & Company Limited                                  |
| School of Practical Accounting & Accounting Services                  |
| The College of Ultrasound Sciences                                    |
| School of Higher Education Limited                                    |
| Catholic Religious Education Development Institute                    |
| HHSL Safety Systems Ltd   |
| Students Accountancy Centre   |
| Advanced Solutions Technical Institute                                |
| Professional School of Accountancy Limited                            |
| School of Accounting and Management Caribbean Limited (SAM Caribbean) |
| Institute of Law and Academic Studies                                 |
| OASIS University  |
| NDE Institute of Trinidad and Tobago                                  |
| CTS College of Business and Computer Science Ltd.                     |
| The Regional Seminary of St. John Vianney & the Uganda Martyrs        |
| The Buena Vista School of Practical Nursing                           |

## ACTT SUPPORTS INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Accreditation is voluntary and institutions that demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest standards seek to be accredited. Graduates of accredited institutions are sought after by employers and universities desirous of attracting the best graduates world wide. In several countries, only students of accredited tertiary institutions have access to student grant funding and other financial incentives.

Quality enhancement is ongoing, pervasive and directly linked to the creation of a quality culture. A quality culture in higher education today requires a shift to outcomes assessment that focuses on the quality of graduates produced and the skills and competencies that they demonstrate in the world of work, research and innovation, academia, civil society and life in general. There is also evidence to support the view that *higher levels of participation in tertiary education and high standards of academic quality and student achievement are*

*positively correlated to increased productivity, greater economic development, improved health, lower crime rates, and more cohesive communities.*

Over the past two and a half years ACTT has hosted over 35 workshops and public fora. Many of them have been repeated several times due to the high demand by stakeholders. The main objectives were to engage institutions in a participatory process that supports capacity-building for the implementation of quality management systems that can improve all aspects of their operations. All workshops were subsidised by ACTT to ensure the widest possible participation.

ACTT continues to place emphasis on supporting institutional strengthening of tertiary level institutions (TLLs) and so institutions can look forward to future workshops and fora that assist them in building institutional capacity and maintaining high standards.

### Major workshops and fora held by ACTT to support institutions:

- The Role and Functions of ACTT
- Understanding the Criteria for Registration
- Processes and Procedures for Accreditation
- Credit Rating and Equivalence Assessment
- Institutional Self-Evaluation
- External Peer Review
- Developing a Quality Policy
- Forensics of Credential Fraud Analysis
- Students' Forum on Quality Education
- Preparing the Application for Registration

## Quality Assurance Week

**The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) will host its first Quality Assurance Week, 21st - 26th September 2008.**

This flagship event under the theme *"Innovating Higher Education to Meet National Development Needs and Global Challenges"* will facilitate cross-fertilisation of ideas and promotion of best practice in the post secondary and tertiary education sector in Trinidad and Tobago. It will involve stakeholders – institutions, students, professional bodies, awarding bodies, business organisations, trade unions and the general public in public lectures, workshops, displays and discussions on issues relevant to the theme.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### SUN 21 SEP

**9:00am - 11:00am** The Auditorium, University of the Southern Caribbean  
Interfaith Service

#### MON 22 SEP

**6:00pm - 9:00pm** Ballroom, Trinidad Hilton and Conference Centre  
Gala Opening and Dinner

#### TUE 23 SEP

**10:00am - 2:00pm** Scarborough Esplanade, Tobago  
ACTT Display and Open House

**5:00pm - 7:00pm** ANSA McAL Building, Scarborough, Tobago  
Public Lecture - Prof. Compton Bourne  
"Quality Education and the CSME: The Challenges of Regional Integration and Development in an Increasingly Competitive and Rapidly Changing Global Environment"

#### THUR 25 SEP

**9:00am - 12:00 noon** University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) O'Meara Campus  
Panel Discussion "Innovating Higher Education to Meet National Development Needs and Global Challenges"

**5:00pm - 7:00pm** Learning Resource Centre (LRC), UWI, St. Augustine  
Public Lecture - Prof. Compton Bourne  
"Quality Education and the CSME: The Challenges of Regional Integration and Development in an Increasingly Competitive and Rapidly Changing Global Environment"

#### FRI 26 SEP

**9:00am - 4:00pm** Brian Lara Promenade, Port of Spain  
ACTT Display and Open House

## HLC Changing of the Guards



Dr. Steven Crow, President of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) (above) will be succeeded by Dr. Sylvia Manning (below).

On June 30th 2008, Dr. Steven Crow retires from his position as the President of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Crow has served for the past decade as the head of the largest regional accrediting body in the USA. He will be succeeded by Dr. Sylvia Manning, former Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Shortly after beginning operations in February 2005, ACTT established a collaborative relationship with HLC in order to draw on technical support and resources to assist the Council in its development. Staff of HLC conducted specialised training in Trinidad and Tobago for staff of ACTT and also facilitated workshops for hundreds of faculty, administrators and other personnel of local tertiary level institutions. Trained and experienced evaluators who serve on accreditation visits for HLC also joined ACTT's Registered Evaluators' Corps to bring a wealth of expertise and provide an international dimension to the evaluation visits for registration and accreditation.

The Executive Director, ACTT, Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne and her staff wish to express their gratitude to Dr. Crow for partnering with ACTT and to extend sincere, best wishes to him for a happy, healthy and fruitful retirement. ACTT also takes this opportunity to welcome Dr. Sylvia Manning on board as we look forward to maintaining our collaborative relationship into the future.

## CARIBBEAN UPDATE

### Regional Engineers Move To Establish Accrediting Body

Professional engineering associations, national accrediting bodies and universities in the English-speaking Caribbean came together recently to discuss the establishment of a specialised accrediting body for engineering. At a meeting held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Monday 7th – Tuesday 8th April, 2008, approximately thirty key stakeholders discussed models of accreditation, the accreditation process, the administrative structure and the financing of the proposed body. Professional associations and licensing bodies play a major role in specialised accreditation. In 2003, CARICOM established the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and other Health Professions (CAAM-HP) which has since accredited the MB BS programme offered by the University of the West Indies for the period 2006 - 2010. For more information you can visit [www.caam-hp.org](http://www.caam-hp.org).

The San Juan, Puerto Rico meeting was organised by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers – Educational Activities Board - Committee on Global Accreditation Activities (IEEE EAB CGAA); the IEEE Trinidad and



Dr. Ruby S. Alleyne, Executive Director, ACTT, (front centre) and other participants in group photo.

Tobago Section; and the Faculty of Engineering of the UWI. It was agreed that priority would be given to the establishment of the Caribbean Accreditation Council for Engineering and Technology (CACET) and a steering committee was set up to lead the initiative. The Steering Committee is chaired by Professor Chandrabhan Sharma of the Faculty of Engineering, UWI (front row, second from right).