



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Feature Address by NGC Group Chairman

Mr. Gerry C. Brooks

Research Awards Ceremony 2016

“Celebrating Excellence in Research”

Wednesday 8th June, 2016 | 5:30pm

Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Auditorium

Allow me to start by congratulating you, Professor Brian Copeland, on your elevation to the position of Principal of The UWI St. Augustine Campus. Your work in the areas of the steelpan specifically, digital electronics and controls generally, are well known and respected. The NGC Group and energy sector wish to convey to you and your family our warmest congratulations.

May I simultaneously convey to outgoing Principal, Professor Clement Sankat, our gratitude for the many years of service and leadership at the University. During my tenure as Group COO of Ansa McAl, he served with distinction on the board of Guardian Media Limited. He also played a significant role in deepening the relationship with the Ansa McAl Psychological Centre and subsequent Chair established by the Group. Professor Sankat, as a retiree myself, you are not retiring, you are merely shifting to other challenges and responsibilities. We wish you well in this new phase of your life and career.

The Caribbean and Trinidad specifically, do not invest consistently enough or deeply enough in rigorous research. Too often in business, industry and even in academia, data is not available or it is dated or incomplete.

For years, our Central Statistical Office was incapacitated. Conclusions are extrapolated, based on assumptions or even anecdotal information. Projects are conceived and pursued on instinct; frequently incomplete data, prejudices the success of the project and may result in significant loss to industry and country. As a progressive society, focussed on developed country status, the quality and breadth of research must be expanded and enhanced to provide the feedstock for industry and economic growth.

Against this background, we at NGC, congratulate the Research Awards Committee, the many University Departments that have completed and submitted research on Food Production; Life Sciences; Engineering; Education; Economics, Medicine and the various departments and faculties. I also congratulate the winners and all nominees for their intrepid and ingenious submissions which drive the UWI research mandate. I thank you for your scholarship and your work, which will be meaningfully employed to propel our small developing society.

We at NGC welcome the opportunity to collaborate and partner with the University. We are charged with the development of the country's gas resources and hydrocarbon assets. You, the UWI, must harness and mould human potential and capital on the other hand. Fundamentally, both institutions play a pivotal role in developing, defining and transforming our society.

We are natural allies and so our relationship must be deepened and continuously re-evaluated. There is a clear nexus and shared responsibility between UWI and NGC.

The NGC Group is in the midst of finalising its strategic plan for the 2016 – 2020 period. This will be completed in Q2 2016 and implemented in Q3 2016. Several new pillars for growth have been identified. These include 1) internationalization of our business; 2) the pursuit of new significant opportunities in the energy value chain and 3) organizational transformation predicated on capacity building and cultural realignment. The new NGC will be vigorously pursuing a number of new opportunities in the Americas, in the hemisphere and in the African content.

Our new strategic intent and objectives will require capital, engineering, business capability and knowledge transfer. The three aforementioned areas are robust; however, NGC is keen to engage with the UWI in dialogue surrounding the pursuit of future potential areas that would redound to the benefit of both parties. We welcome the opportunity to deepen our partnership with the UWI to accelerate the realisation of our objectives.

Our recent trip to Ghana has unearthed gas processing, pipeline and port opportunities. How can we accommodate Ghanaian and other African students wishing to access our engineering, business and other faculties at UWI? How do we incorporate students at the technical level into UWI and UTT who wish to improve their competence and knowledge base as a gateway to higher certification and accomplishments?

Even more than knowledge transfer, these student experiences create deep personal and institutional linkages that can deepen and accelerate South-South trade. Let's find a way to deepen the NGC/UWI partnership which will also accelerate acquisition of our strategic objectives.

This is the third installation of the UWI-NGC Research Awards. I am advised that NGC has committed more than \$15 million to The UWI since 1994, through our support of the Institute of Engineering, grants for BSc students in the Petroleum Geoscience programme; contributions to the University's Graduate and Research Fund; sponsorship of various Conferences on the Economy; donation to the Trevor Boopsingh Endowment Fund and Sponsorship of the UWI Research Awards; Research Forum; Research Expo and Chair in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Today's energy architecture of US\$49 oil and US\$2.50 gas, the shale gas revolution, depressed demand and push for alternative energy, demands transformative thinking. We suggest a small working group comprising UWI researchers and NGC professionals meet to define a scope and menu of high priority research areas to ensure our successful navigation of this new environment.

A significant challenge facing the energy sector is supply shortfall from the upstream, which is adversely impacting both downstream and country revenues. Various strategies are being employed to address and reverse this shortfall, including gas into the system from cross-border fields (Loran-Manatee) and more recently, Dragon and associated fields. Small and marginal fields collectively represent a significant source of gas which can also be commercially viable.

We need entrepreneurial intent and innovative strategies to help bring those opportunities on stream. We see a role for research capability and scholarship at UWI.

Renewable energy presents a goldmine of opportunity to us in the Caribbean. Diversifying our energy mix to incorporate solar and wind power would not only liberate more natural gas for industrial use or export as LNG, but will also reduce the government's expenditure on the electricity subsidy. Moreover, as party to the COP21 Climate Change Conference, our country has promised to actively seek a reduced carbon footprint. Green energy is an expedient solution and a worthy candidate for research. How can we accelerate studies relative to solar and wind farms? Innovation of small-scale domestic applications for harvesting renewable power as a fixture in our energy landscape is an important consideration in the medium term ... Let's challenge ourselves.

UWI has been good to me. I am a proud graduate, previous Lecturer in Law and Business and a "Distinguished Alumni". This evening I and we at NGC, reiterate our commitment to be actively involved in the process of realising our shared expectations. We have one shared vision – developing Trinidad and Tobago for future generations!

As we move forward at NGC, we are setting a higher bar on accountability and delivery. We are also demanding the same from our partners. This should not be interpreted as concern or finger pointing, but as our continuing drive for improvement and excellence. You will see us calling for more reporting and tracking of programme effectiveness to enable us to make data informed decisions that will enhance research design and outcomes.

That is our new mantra and modus. In the end, both organisations, the country and region will benefit.

I end my address by a quote from, Nathan Myhrvold, CEO, Intellectual Ventures:

“ We live in a society where technology is a very important force in business, in our daily lives. And all technology starts as a spark in someone's brain. An idea of something that didn't exist before, that once they have invented it —brought it into existence — could change everything. And that activity is generally one that's not very well supported.”

We at NGC have supported, and will continue to support innovation at The University of the West Indies.

Let us build on the present, re-imagine the future and transform our society together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.