The University of the West Indies Alumni Association (Florida Chapter)

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Editors: Sandra Schrouder, Rupert Rhodd & Peter Smith

From the President, Dr. Cheralee Morgan

Dear Members and Friends of the Association,

On behalf of the Executive and the entire Florida Chapter, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your continued support, engagement, and commitment to our alma mater. It is because of members and friends like you that we are able to carry forward UWI's mission of excellence and to invest meaningfully in the next generation of Caribbean scholars.

Before I turn to the business of our Chapter, I want to pause and reflect on the recent passing of our dear member, Reicland Anderson, a devoted supporter of the chapter and by extension, the UWI. His presence, generosity, and commitment to our Chapter's work will be deeply missed. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing him. His contributions to this Association and to the broader UWI community leave a lasting legacy, and we will honor his memory as we continue the work he so faithfully supported.

As we look ahead, I want to encourage everyone to rally behind our two upcoming major fundraising initiatives, both of which directly provide scholarships to current UWI students.

The Annual Scholarship Raffle: Every ticket purchased brings us closer to helping a deserving student continue their education.

The All Alumni Walkathon: **Saturday, December 5, 2026**. This is always one of our most spirited and community-building events of the year, bringing together alumni, friends, and families for a great cause. Whether you walk, sponsor a walker, or simply cheer everyone on, your participation makes a real difference.

Together, these initiatives sustain our scholarship program. This is the heart of what our Chapter stands for, and I hope you will join us, whether by purchasing raffle tickets, registering for the Walkathon, or simply spreading the word within your networks.

Thank you, as always, for your generosity and your unwavering commitment to UWI and to the students whose futures we help shape together.

Dr. Cheralee Morgan

Welcome & Congratulations to UWI Graduate Ms. Angela Rose Howell, Officer-in-Charge, Consulate General of Jamaica, Miami



Please accept our heartfelt congratulations and warmest welcome as you assume the duties of Officer-in-Charge at the Consulate General of Jamaica, Miami.

We take particular pride in celebrating this appointment as a fellow graduate of the University of the West Indies. Your journey from the halls of UWI to this position of leadership is a source of great pride for our entire alumni community, and it exemplifies the excellence, discipline, and commitment to nation-building that our alma mater instills in all who pass through its doors.

Your appointment comes at a significant juncture, as Jamaica continues its resilience-building journey and as our community here in Southern Florida remains steadfast in its support of the island's growth and development.

The Florida Chapter looks forward to collaborating with you and the Consulate team, and to contributing wherever we can as you work to serve and strengthen ties between Jamaica and its diaspora here in Southern Florida.

Congratulations once again, and a warm UWI welcome from your UWI Florida Family!

WELL DONE DR. CELIA DAVIDSON-FRANCIS



What an incredible milestone!

Completing your doctorate at the University of the West Indies is no small feat, and it stands as a testament to your dedication, discipline, and intellectual curiosity. Years of research, writing, setbacks, and breakthroughs have all led to this moment, and it is richly deserved.

Earning the title of "Doctor" is more than an academic achievement; it reflects your perseverance and the countless hours you poured into your work, even when the path was challenging. This journey is truly inspiring. Please take a moment to celebrate this achievement. You've earned it!

Warmest congratulations on this outstanding achievement, Dr. Davidson-Francis!

The Florida Chapter- UWI Alumni Association

IN MEMORIAM: MR. REICLAND ANDERSON

Member of the Florida Chapter of the University of the West Indies Alumni Association

It is with profound sadness that we report the passing of our dear brother and fellow pelican, Reicland Anderson. The chapter extends its deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing and working alongside him.

Reicland passed away on September 5, 2026, and was, for many years, a devoted and avid member of our Chapter, a community activist whose commitment to service never wavered. He gave generously of his time, energy, and heart to causes that uplifted our Chapter and strengthened the ties between the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, the wider Caribbean, and our adopted home here in Florida. Whether through community organizing, advocacy, or simply showing up faithfully for every initiative that called for support, Reicland embodied the very spirit of service that defines the best of who we are as UWI alums.

Those who worked alongside him knew well the qualities that set his service apart: a willingness to do the unglamorous work behind the scenes, a readiness to lend a hand wherever it was needed, and a consistency that never wavered, whether the task was large or small. Community activism is rarely about applause; it is about the quiet decision, made again and again over the years, to remain present and engaged when so many others move on. Reicland made that decision time and time again, and our Chapter is stronger for it.

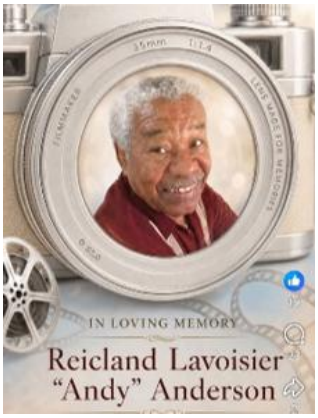
Membership in an alumni association is often measured in years, but true commitment is measured in impact. By both standards, Reicland's contribution to our Chapter stood tall. He was one of the longest-serving members of the Chapter and championed the causes that mattered most to our Chapter and the diaspora. His fingerprints can be found across so much of the good work our Chapter has accomplished over the years. His loyalty to UWI, and to the broader mission of keeping UWI graduates connected and engaged long after graduation, helped build a more vibrant, more connected, and more purposeful community for all of us.

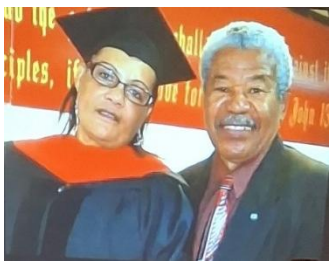
Beyond the Chapter itself, Reicland's spirit of activism rippled outward into the wider Jamaican and Caribbean community in Florida, advocating for issues that affected our people, building bridges between organizations, and reminding all of us that the work of community does not end with graduation, but truly begins there. It is this broader vision, paired with genuine humility and warmth, that earned him the respect and admiration of so many across our alumni networks.

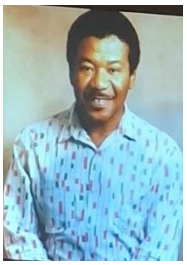
We are grateful for Reicland's tireless advocacy, quiet consistency, and genuine love for community, qualities that inspired those around him to give a little more, show up a little more, and care a little more. In honoring his memory today, we also honor the values our UWI Alumni Association Chapter holds dear: service, solidarity, and an unshakeable commitment to lifting each other up.

Rest in peace, Reicland Anderson. Your work will not be forgotten, and your example will continue to guide all of us in the Florida Chapter of the University of the West Indies Alumni Association as we carry forward the causes that mattered most to you.

With deep gratitude, love, and respect,
The Florida Chapter of the University of the West Indies Alumni Association

















THIS IS MORE THAN A WALK, IT'S A MOVEMENT!

Every dollar raised stays with your alumni associations to fund projects that give back directly to your alma mater: scholarships, infrastructure, equipment, and programs that keep your school strong for the next generation.

- **Date: Saturday, December 5, 2026**
- **Time: 9:00 AM (Starting time)**

Congratulations To UWI graduate Ms. Opal Gibson, the new President of the Florida Chapter of Immaculate Conception Alumnae!



This is a well-deserved honor, and it reflects the trust and confidence your fellow alumnae have in your leadership skills. We wish you and your executive board every success in the year ahead. May your work strengthen the bonds among our sisters, support the traditions we hold dear, and continue to honor the legacy of Immaculate Conception and our Alumni Community.

THE ALUMNI PLEDGE

As a graduate of The University of the West Indies, I commit myself to uphold the ideals and goals of my alma mater. My conduct and voice shall reflect the commitment to excellence of the "Light Rising from the West", as I fulfill my social and professional responsibilities and serve my community and region.

I will strive to ensure the UWI's place as a Caribbean icon: the catalyst for Caribbean development and leadership. It is a legacy that I will proudly help build for future generations. The UWI - First in our hearts and first in our region!

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UWI ALUM ARIEL BOWEN IS JAMAICA'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamina Johnson Smith, has appointed Mrs. Ariel Bowen as Jamaica's seventh Ambassador to Japan. Mrs. Bowen is a career diplomat with more than 30 years' experience in the Foreign Service. She replaces Ambassador Shorna-Kay Richards and currently serves as Officer-in-Charge at the Consulate-General of Jamaica in New York, a post she has held since November last year.

An alumna of Holy Childhood High School, the Ambassador-designate holds a Master of Science in Government, specialising in International Relations from the University of the West Indies, Mona.

Prior to her current assignment, Mrs. Bowen served as Under-Secretary (Acting) in the Ministry's Diaspora, Protocol and Consular Division, with responsibility for managing the Division's operations and overseeing the development and implementation of related policies. Mrs. Bowen is expected to assume office in Tokyo in a few weeks. (Link to the full Article)

ANNUAL UWI ALUMNI (FLORIDA) SCHOLARSHIP RAFFLE

https://go.rallyup.com/uwialumniflorida2026
(Buy raffle here!)

HELP A UWI STUDENT ACHIEVE!!!

The UWI (Florida) Alumni Association is excited to host our Prize Raffle in support of scholarships for bright, hardworking students at the University of the West Indies! 🎓✨

Your participation helps keep a proud tradition alive; last year, eight deserving students received scholarships thanks to generous supporters like you. This year, you can help us make an even bigger impact while also having a chance to win! 💛❤️💚

🥇 First Prize: $1,000
🥈 Second Prize: $500
🥉 Third Prize: $250

Every ticket you purchase is more than just an entry; it is an investment in the future of UWI students who are ready to shine but need a little financial help to achieve their dreams. 💐

Get your tickets, spread the word, and let's keep making a difference—one scholarship at a time! 🎟️

Meet the Organization



Visit UWI Alumni Association (Florida)
www.uwiaafl.org

The University of the West Indies Alumni Association Florida Chapter (UWIAAFL Chapter), formerly the UWI Guild of Graduates, Florida Chapter, was formed in 1995 by a group of alumni brought together by their desire to stay connected to their alma mater, to contribute to the development of the University of the West Indies, and to help build communities through volunteer efforts and philanthropy.

Write to us:
uwiaafl@gmail.com

FROM KINGSTON TO THE TOP 100: HOW UWI GRADUATE & ECONOMIST KEISHA BLAIR EARNED A PLACE AMONG CANADA'S MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

Economist, author and entrepreneur Keisha Blair has been named one of WXN's Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 for 2026, in the Professionals category. The honour recognizes a career that runs from her early life in St Andrew and the University of the West Indies through Canadian economic policy to a global wellness-and-finance movement.

Born and raised in St. Andrew, Blair graduated from Immaculate Conception High School in 1993 before attending the University of the West Indies, Mona, where she double-majored in International Relations and Management Studies. A mock United Nations General Assembly during her university years helped fuel an early ambition to become a diplomat. Jamaicans.com

Blair trained as an economist and worked in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. She has an MSc in public policy from Carleton University in Ottawa and is a graduate of the Executive Leadership Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Public service runs in her family. Her mother, Dr. Bernice Williams, served as an Assistant Chief Education Officer in Jamaica's Ministry of Education, headed the English Department at Shortwood Teachers College and lectured at UWI. According to Blair, her mother was also among the first policy advisers chosen and trained for the Jamaican government's first policy unit under Prime Minister P.J. Patterson. Blair says Jamaica remains central to her identity, while Canada is where she built much of her professional career.

Inside Canadian Economic Policy

Her bio describes her as a Senior Economist in Economic Development and Corporate Finance, working on several federal budgets. She was also part of the Canadian Prime Minister's supporting delegation to the World Economic Forum in 2018 and to the East-Asia (ASEAN) Summit in Singapore. She led events including the FORTUNE Most Powerful Women Summit in Montreal and the Fortune Global Forum. At the Privy Council Office, as a Senior Advisor during Justin Trudeau's tenure, Blair says she became the first Black woman to lead Canada's foreign direct investment file in support of the Prime Minister. That is her own account of the milestone.

Turning Loss into a Framework

Blair has spoken openly about the personal side of her story. She was widowed at 31, eight weeks after the birth of her second child. She says that experience, along with her professional work, shaped her focus on women's economic empowerment. It also led her to develop a framework for recovering from setbacks and building a fuller idea of a "life well lived." Adam Mendler

The result was **Holistic Wealth**. In 2019 she coined the term with her first book of that name, and she has since written an expanded edition and a personal workbook. The idea is that wealth goes beyond money to include purpose, well-being and balance. Blair says the framework can be applied to individuals, organizations and nations.



Building a Movement

Blair has turned the idea into an institution. She founded the Institute on Holistic Wealth, described as the first international Holistic Wealth coaching certification institute, and started Global Holistic Wealth Day, now celebrated in over 80 countries. Her site describes it as a global movement reaching hundreds of millions of people. Other profiles cite smaller reach figures, so those numbers are her own estimates. Goodreads

A Bridge Between Two Countries

The 2026 recognition brings together the two places that shaped her: a Jamaican upbringing and a Canadian policy career. For young Caribbean women in particular, her path shows how far a UWI education can go when paired with ambition and a willingness to turn personal hardship into purpose.

The UWI Researchers Win World's Largest Education Prize for Transforming Early Childhood Development



2026 Laureates for the Yidan Prize for Education Development (l-r) Professor Susan P. Walker, Emeritus Professor of Nutrition, Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), UWI; Professor Sally Grantham-McGregor, University College London; and Dr Susan M. Chang-Lopez, Senior Lecturer at CAIHR, UWI.

Two University of the West Indies (The UWI) researchers have been named 2026 Yidan Prize laureates for Education Development. Widely regarded as the world's highest accolade in education, the award recognises over three decades of work that has transformed how we understand and support early childhood development globally.

Professor Susan P. Walker, Emeritus Professor of Nutrition at The UWI's Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), and Dr Susan M. Chang-Lopez, Senior Lecturer at CAIHR, share the 2026 award with long-time collaborator Sally Grantham-McGregor, Emeritus Professor at the University College, London. Professor Grantham-McGregor worked at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) from 1967 and subsequently joined the Tropical Metabolism Research Unit, UWI. She left as professor in 1995. The trio were recognised for creating *Reach Up*, an evidence-based, scalable, early childhood intervention that has grown from a 1986 research study in Jamaica to a programme reaching hundreds of thousands of children from vulnerable homes across 21 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and is currently scaling to reach 1.5 million in Brazil.

Announcing the laureates, Dorothy K. Gordon, Head of the Yidan Prize Judging Panel for Education Development, said the winners "have reshaped global education" with some of the strongest empirical evidence demonstrating the connection between early stimulation and pre-formal school learning and lifelong attainment. Acknowledging that one major cause of lower development in children growing up in poverty is a lack of early learning opportunities at home and limited access to pre-primary education, she commended the laureates' generosity in sharing their findings and intervention techniques. According to Gordon, the resulting "practical innovation" in the *Reach Up* programme and the strong, international network of partner institutions around it demonstrate "how lasting change can be achieved through a combination of evidence, partnership and local leadership."

Reach Up provides low-cost, practical, culturally adaptable solutions to expand caregivers' capacity to provide stimulation for children ages 0-4. The activities, built around everyday routines, help caregivers build the knowledge, skills and confidence to talk, play and respond in ways that support cognitive development. Implemented through a network of existing health, social protection, education and humanitarian systems, *Reach Up*'s curriculum and resources are free and continuously evaluated and adapted to keep the programme effective.

Awardee Professor Susan P. Walker, who led CAIHR as Director from 2012 to 2020, celebrated the impact of the research, saying, "Our vision is to ensure children have early environments that support their development, the foundation for success at school and across the life course. *Reach Up* started in 1991 as the Jamaica Home Visit programme, testing the idea that regular, low-cost stimulation from their caregiver, delivered through play, conversation, and homemade toys, could change a child's development trajectory as powerfully as good nutrition. We followed the participants as adults and showed those who participated in the programme earned 25-40 per cent more than their peers, with better cognitive skills and improved mental health outcomes. We are very grateful to the Yidan Foundation for highlighting our work and the importance of investment in the early development of our most vulnerable to reduce inequality."

Co-laureate Dr Chang-Lopez also expressed deep gratitude for the award. "The Yidan award is a public recognition of over 40 years of research conducted here in Jamaica and with partners worldwide. It is an acknowledgement of our life's work. We are deeply grateful to our many colleagues who have contributed to this work currently and in the past. We also thank the many parents and children who have participated in our studies and to our *Reach Up* global community who are committed to the programme."

With the 2026 Yidan Prize, the laureates receive HK$30 million (approximately US$3.8 million) as an award and an unrestricted project fund to advance their future research. Laureates will be honoured at the Yidan Prize Summit in Hong Kong from December 3 to 5, 2026.

Offering his congratulations to the researchers, current CAIHR Director, Professor Marshall Tulloch-Reid said, "This achievement underscores the real-world impact of our research and aligns with the mission of CAIHR to enhance the health and well-being of Caribbean and global populations, through innovative research and strategic partnerships."

https://www.mona.uwi.edu/news/uwi-researchers-win-world%E2%80%99s-largest-education-prize-transforming-early-childhood-development

The Region Honours Its Own: UWI Names 13 Honorary Graduands for 2026

The University of the West Indies has named 13 honourees for its 2026 graduation ceremonies. The award of these prestigious honorary degrees continues the university's long-standing tradition of celebrating the region's most notable luminaries for their contributions to Caribbean life and development. This year's awardees boast outstanding careers spanning journalism and media, ministry and community service, diplomacy, medicine, agricultural development, law and public service, culture, sport, and music.

Approved by the University Council, the honorary degrees will be conferred at The UWI's 2026 graduation ceremonies which will take place between October 10 and November 14, 2026.

The schedule for the 2026 ceremonies and the list of honorary graduands follow.

Five Islands Campus – October 10

- **Mr. Don Rojas** of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for his contribution to Caribbean and American Media ***Doctor of Letters (DLitt)***

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- **Ms. Thea LaFond** of Dominica for her contribution to Sport – ***Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

Cave Hill Campus – October 17

- **Mr. Doug E. Fresh** of the United States of America for his contribution to the arts through Hip-Hop music ***Doctor of Letters (DLitt)***

- **Reverend Dr. Lucille Onita Baird, M.B.E., J.P.** of Barbados for her contribution to the church, community leadership and social commentary – ***Doctor of Letters (DLitt)***

St. Augustine Campus – October 22 to 24

- **Ambassador Colin Granderson** of Trinidad and Tobago for his work in diplomacy – ***Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

- **Professor Shaneeta Johnson** of The Bahamas for her contribution to the development of surgical sciences and health care – ***Doctor of Science (DSc)***

- **Mr. Winston R. Rudder** of Trinidad and Tobago for his contribution to agricultural development, public service, food and sustainable development **– *Doctor of Science (DSc)***

Mona Campus – November 5 to 7

- **Mr. Arnold Bertram** of Jamaica for his contribution to Caribbean scholarship and public advocacy – ***Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

- **Mr. Damian Marley** of Jamaica for his contribution to culture – ***Doctor of Letters (DLitt)***

- **Mrs. Dawn Robinson-Spence** of Jamaica for her contribution to culture – ***Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

- **Mr. Milton J. Samuda** of Jamaica for public service, advocacy and administration – ***Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

Global Campus – November 14

- **Mr. Melvin L. Claxton** of Antigua and Barbuda for his contribution to journalism – *Doctor of Letters* ***(DLitt)***

- **Ms. René Baptiste CMG** of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for her contribution to governance, law and culture **– *Doctor of Laws (LLD)***

More about each selectee can be found by clicking this link: https://www.mona.uwi.edu/news/region-honours-its-own-uwi-names-13-honorary-graduands-2026