Trinidad: USC receives full institutional accreditation from the Council of Trinidad and Tobago

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Dr. Michael Dowlath, chairman of the board of ACTT, during a conferral ceremony held at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad on May 21, 2012.

Dr. Dowlath briefly explained the procedures of the accreditation process to USC administrators and educators, and proceeded to confer upon USC seven (7) years accreditation status—the maximum granted by ACTT to any institution. He mentioned that USC has created history, as it is the first private religious institution to receive accreditation from ACTT in the Caribbean region.

In response, Dr. Clinton Valley, recently appointed as the 26th president of USC, thanked ACTT leaders and paid special tribute to his predecessor, Dr. Trevor George Gardner, under whose aegis the process toward accreditation started.

Dr. Valley shared his administration’s commitment to continuing the legacy of quality values-based education that is the hallmark of USC. In addition, Dr. Valley recognized and thanked Senator Hon. Minister Fazal Karim for his willingness to embrace private institutions like USC, and for providing environments for them to contribute to the higher educational aspirations of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

"Accreditation is based on vocation instead of vacation, and confidence instead of concern," said Minister Karim. He cautioned that the award of accreditation should be viewed as a responsibility for USC to continue to live up to the high-quality ideals for which it is known. “Consider this accreditation as a category one award,” he said. "You are now upgraded, and you must do everything not to be downgraded."

Minister Karim noted that the strength of universities is built on teaching, learning and research, but more importantly, the commitment of all three to respond through the mechanism of community social responsibility, by returning the investment that citizens have placed in graduates. "A great outcome will only be derived if the transformation process is good," he noted. The task of the university, therefore, is to take the inputs [students] and transform them into the required outputs [graduates] equipped to serve the country.

Institutional Accreditation, as designed by the ACTT, focuses on the holistic characteristics of an institution and evaluates its organizational capability to deliver quality educational programs at the post-secondary and tertiary levels. In this type of accreditation, the programs offered are not analyzed individually; however, the programs offered are studied as part of the consideration for the entire university.

Institutional characteristics such as governance, administrative strength, academic policies and procedures, quality of faculty, physical facilities and financial stability are taken into consideration.
Over the many years of our operation, USC has continuously received specialized programs accreditation, leaders said. These were evaluated based on criteria set out by other Accreditation Bodies, which included, but were not limited to, the quality of teaching and the support of learning; design and planning of programs of study; assessment and feedback to learners; learning environments and learner support systems; programs evaluation; and quality assurance systems.

These accreditations were offered through an affiliation agreement with Andrews University, located in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States whose programs were, in turn, fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS). In addition, USC has obtained accreditation from the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA), which is ongoing and continuous.

In preparation for ACTT’s accreditation, USC began work on the Self-Study Evaluation process in 2011. In the early months of 2012, teams of expert assessors established by this Accreditation body visited the institution to conduct the rigorous external evaluations.

For more information on the University of Southern Caribbean, visit http://usc.edu.tt/