



West Indies Group of University
Teachers, Jamaica
1961-73, 1973-2011

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

EBook EBOOK

Produced by the Public Relations & Publications Committee

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

There's no 'WI' without U

If there is a truism within the work of the Union, and WIGUT (Jamaica) in particular, it is the fact that there is no 'WI' without 'U'. It both centres the work that we do within the context of The UWI, and also, it recognizes that there is no union without all of us being engaged and participating. So, as I give this report, I am pleased to say that taken together, this past year, in which we celebrated our 65th anniversary, was a monumental year. And we could not have done it without you. Although I lead the charge, the achievements and successes seen over the past 12 months have been realized by the collective efforts of many persons, including the hardworking Executive and Management Committees. How can I not say thanks to the membership and PR committees for their consistent hard work: the Christmas party was the bomb!

Colleagues, I must remind you that the work of the Union is multi-faceted, and the industrial relations climate has become increasingly complex, and sometimes there is the temptation to pit one activity against another, without a full grasp of the whole. However, for medium- and long-term effectiveness as a Union, expressed in public health terms, we must ensure that we maintain dominance, i.e., autonomy and authority over those things within our purview, and conquest, i.e., widespread use and availability of services, and responsiveness to members' expectations. This is a tall ask, and one mandate for the next administration must be to educate the membership, but especially the Executive Committee, about the role and responsibilities of a trade union, having regard to the Constitution and the local laws pertaining to industrial relations.

For this reporting, I will focus on Negotiations and the Compensation Review, which will encompass several aspects of the work of the Union, and will mention some others in passing.

Colleagues, I am pleased to announce that we have largely completed the negotiations for the 2023-2026 triennium, and the signing is set to take place shortly. Thereafter, we plan to finalize the claims for the School of Clinical Medicine and Research in the Bahamas and the UWI14 Global Campus, formerly Open Campus. As the Mona Campus welcomed a new Principal, this delayed the start of formal negotiations even though the Claims proposal was submitted on time. Nonetheless, we are close to the finish line and expect to present to you shortly the items that we have concurrence on.

Regarding the Compensation Review activity for the UWI operations in Jamaica, the consultants were not formally contracted as per discussions in March 2023. Out of this aspect of the negotiations, the Solidarity newsletter was re-introduced in November 2023 to keep members up to date on various aspects of the negotiations. You will recall that the November issue laid out a 3-point objective for the immediate fight: immediate financial relief, regional and

internationally competitive salaries, and timely negotiation of non-salary items on the 2023-2026 claim. In December 2023, we presented our demand that meaningful negotiations involving the GoJ on our claim for a 25% interim cost of living allowance must start before January 5, 2024. In the January 2024 issue of the newsletter, we reported that we met with the Ministers of Finance and Education, the University management, and the leadership of the other Unions, and decided on the way forward. Essentially, this meeting set the stage for the establishment of a tripartite committee to examine proposals and report back to the Minister of Finance. In the April 2024 edition, we noted the outcome of the Emergency general meeting, where members voted to accept the government's offer of a 15% increase effective April 2024. Notwithstanding the agreement, there was a procedural delay that resulted in the adjustments being made in May, just last week. To my certain knowledge, this has been done. Now we look forward to the engagement of the Consultants to carry out the compensation review, and prepare for the long haul of the negotiations to follow.

Perhaps the most significant developments in the issue of the interim cost of living allowance were the formal discussions and negotiations with the Ministers of Finance and Education, and their involvement in signing as witnesses of the final agreement. This is monumental as we have not seen this involvement of the line ministers since the early 1990s!

We are happy to report that there have been positive developments with the Centre and Global Campus regarding payables for Study and Travel grants and Book grants. Both business units have formally agreed to clear arrears for both grants. In the case of the Centre, that process is far advanced, and should be completed by end of May 2024. For the Global Campus, preliminary work has just begun. Essentially, the Principal will write a letter to the Union, by 30th May 2024, acknowledging that it is in breach of its obligations in relation to STG arrears and refunds. The Campus has indicated its intention to formally request a grace period of no more than one month within which to research its financial circumstances, and to outline a schedule for eliminating the arrears on refunds due to members for both grants.

Further, the Global Campus Principal will write the Union a letter, by 30th May 2024, acknowledging that the Campus has failed to implement the increases in emoluments as outlined in the 2020-2023 collective bargaining agreement for the UWI 12+2. Similar to the foregoing, the Campus has indicated that it will request a grace period of no more than one month within which to research its financial circumstances and also propose a schedule for the implementation of the emoluments increases.

On the matter of 'right-sizing' of the Global Campus, the Union was told that a process was in train, via consultants Nancy George and Associates, to complete the decision-making process on redundancies over the next 2-3 months. We have met with the Consultants, and there are some major issues with how the process has started, but more anon. Needless to say, the Union stressed the importance of communication with the Union on the part of the management as this process unfolds.

Finally, the Union alerted the Global campus management that the claim for the UWI 12+2 would be submitted on or about 31st May 2024.

We are happy to report that the Five Islands pension matter has been amicably resolved, as the Campus/University F&GPC has settled on the 10+5 rule for pension contribution for academic, senior administrative and professional staff, as required by the Blue Book. We recognize the work of University Counsel and current FIC Principal, PVC Robinson for their involvement in this process. We are working with the FIC to conclude representation for the staff.

We can report that the Email and Disability policies were approved at University F&GPC, although there are still some items associated with the Disability policy yet to be worked through, especially those related to Career Path. There remain a few items to be resolved on draft Gender policy. Ordinance 8 revision is on-going, and there are discussions on job descriptions and a contract template for ASAP staff, the grievance procedure/Alternate Dispute Resolution policy as well as a proposal for the revision of subsistence/per diem rates.

Before I close, I must interject an important caveat: with the Mona Campus, Global Campus and Centre moving to honour their financial obligations to staff in a timely manner, we cannot simultaneously ask for the continued waiver of Blue Book clause 139, which speaks to the 4-year limit for accumulation of Study and Travel Grant amounts. This means that staff are strongly encouraged to apply for and attend relevant conferences and activities that support professional development.

As I close this address, I want to specially recognize Dr. Charmaine McKenzie and Mr. Dunstan Newman (Vice-Presidents), Ms. Anthia Muirhead (General Secretary), Ms. Sandra Stubbs and Ms. Audrey Saddler (Assistant General Secretaries); Mrs. Shana Hastings Edwards (Treasurer), Miss Merlyn Reid (Assistant Treasurer); Special Secretaries and Section Representatives; Dr. Donna Minott Kates (co-opted member – i/c constitutional matters and elections), Professor Hubert Devonish (Chief Negotiator), Mr. Gavin Walters (Industrial Relations Officer), Miss Frances Richards (Administrator) and Mr. Nathan Williams (Bearer). There is no 'WI' without 'U'. In the same breath, I also commend those who have served on the various Union committees, on University committees, as Section/Unit reps, as reps of the various Branches, and those dispersed in the UWI 12+2 countries. It has been an honour to serve the Union in this capacity over the past year, and I look forward to what is ahead. God bless.

Thank you.

Prof. Paul D. Brown

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

The period 2023-2024 presented ample opportunities for us to celebrate as a Union, and for these opportunities, we are truly thankful. In 2023 we celebrated 65 years of being a body fighting for the rights of our members. This could not have been accomplished without your trust in and loyalty to the Association. Indeed, our advocacy on your behalf is our lifeblood.

The period also saw the return of our Christmas shindig. Although challenges associated with the global pandemic continued into 2023, it was a relief to see the Union resume in-person gatherings starting with our Christmas party in December 2023. For all who attended – and 570 meal tickets were distributed - I am sure you will agree with me that the party, dubbed *Confluence: the Sapphire Edition*, was a blast and the coming together was both exhilarating and energizing.

During the period under review we stood together, united in the cause for each other, whether it was to send the message that late salaries for our Global Campus colleagues will not be tolerated and will provoke action, or to fight for better working conditions of members. Your Union was in action in the past administrative year.

The Union in Solidarity

During the period a Negotiations Committee was put in place to negotiate on members' behalf. The Committee comprised Hubert Devonish as Team lead, Paul Brown (President), Charmaine McKenzie (Vice President), Dunstan Newman (Vice President), Patrick Anglin (Team Member), Anna Perkins (Team Member), Sonjah Stanley Niaah (Team Member), Kurt Vaz (Grievance Officer), and our Industrial Relations Officer, Gavin Walters. The Committee met 27 times over the course of the review period to discuss matters related to the ongoing negotiations between WIGUT (Jamaica) and The University of the West Indies (UWI) for the 2023 – 2026 collective bargaining period.

I can report that the Committee is in the process of finalizing a Collective Bargaining Agreement with The UWI that addresses the non-salaried items in the Memorandum of Proposals (MoPs) that was submitted to The UWI on June 21, 2023. The parties also signed off on a cost-of-living allowance (COLA), item 7 of the MoPs, that was requested as an interim arrangement to alleviate some of the financial burden of members until the compensation review process is conducted and its recommendations used to determine the new salary scales for UWI staff. The interim COLA was voted for by a majority (70%) of the WIGUT members that attended an Emergency General Meeting (EGM) that was called on April 5, 2024, to discuss the offer that was made by the Government of Jamaica (GoJ), The UWI and all bargaining units on the Mona Campus on April 3, 2024. The details of the offer are as follows:

A salary increase of 15%, effective April 2024, to be paid as follows:

- (a) A retroactive payment of 5% that would cover the period August 2023 to March 2024, to be paid in October 2024.
- (b) A salary increase of 9.5% to take effect April 2024. It was noted that through compound interest the net overall increase to salaries will amount to 15%.

Outside of the interim salary increase, negotiations for the COLA have achieved the following 3 things:

1. It has gotten the GoJ to treat The UWI, Mona as part of the public sector wage reform and fund its compensation review process,
2. It has pushed the government to be directly engaged in wage-related WIGUT (Jamaica) negotiations with The UWI and to be co-signers to the interim COLA agreement,
3. It has ensured that the GoJ will be involved in the funding of any wage increases which might be recommended coming out of the compensation review process.

Having safely guided negotiations with The UWI to a point where agreements are being finalised for official signing, the Negotiations Committee is turning its attention to WIGUT (Jamaica) members in The UWI 12+2, and the School of Clinical Medicine and Research (SCRM) in the Bahamas. This is to ensure that the specific concerns of Union members in these territories are addressed by the CBA that is entered into on their behalf.

Grievance Committee

The full Grievance Committee did not meet during the academic year 2023 – 2024; however, the members were apprised of the following matters over the course of the year through the Grievance Secretary, Mr. Kurt Vaz.

1. The WIGUT Executive had given approval for the establishment of a Legal Sub-Committee to review cases brought to the Union's attention that require the competencies of persons steeped in Jamaican jurisprudence. And although that Sub-Committee did not officially commence its duties this past academic year, Mr. Vaz along with Mr. Walters, when necessary, sought the advice of Attorney-At-Law and WIGUT member, Janett Levy on contracts and other related matters.
2. The Grievance Secretary and the WIGUT office handled several complaints of the past academic year. All but one were resolved; and at the time of this report the outstanding complaint was still being investigated.

Professional Development Committee

During the period under review, the Professional Development Committee held a series of important planning sessions on key areas for membership. Some notable areas are customized training in specific areas, CV writing, knowing your career progression, and identifying key groups whose career path was in need of revision. One customized workshop was held for the Health Center and Mona WJC medical team.

Pension Committee

The WIGUT Pension Committee organized a two-day seminar titled "Empowering Your Future: Navigating Retirement and Wellness" aimed at providing essential information and resources to assist members in their transition to retirement. The seminar featured presentations from various experts covering topics ranging from financial planning to healthcare and estate management.

Overall, the seminar provided valuable information and resources to assist members in navigating retirement and wellness, emphasizing financial planning, health care, housing, and estate management. The committee remains committed to supporting members through their retirement journey and looks forward to further engagement with pensioners.

Plans for 2024/2025 Academic Year

Looking ahead to the 2024/2025 academic year, the committee has outlined several initiatives to further support its members:

Sessions with Investors: The team intends to host sessions with investors to provide valuable insights into investment opportunities.

Investment Literacy Workshops: Recognizing the importance of investment literacy, the committee plans to conduct workshops focused on enhancing members' understanding of investment principles and strategies. These workshops will empower members to build and manage their investment portfolios effectively.

Engagement Sessions for Pensioners: In an effort to enhance engagement with pensioners, the committee will organize dedicated sessions tailored to their needs and interests. These sessions will provide pensioners with valuable resources, support, and opportunities for networking and social interaction.

WhatsApp Group for Pensioners: To facilitate communication and updates, the committee plans to establish a WhatsApp group exclusively for pensioners. This platform will serve as a convenient channel for delivering updates, sharing offers, and fostering community among pensioners.

These initiatives underscore the committee's commitment to supporting members throughout their retirement journey by providing access to resources, fostering financial literacy, and facilitating meaningful engagement opportunities.

Public Relations & Publications Committee

The work of the Public Relations and Publications Committee continued under new, but no less commendable, leadership in the review period. Meetings were held in a hybrid format to accommodate better attendance by members, but the low participation at meetings was noted. The loss of persons with critical IT and communication skills led to a significant impact on human and material resources especially affecting the production of the Newsletter and the publication of the ADZE Magazine.

Over the period, Committee published:

Newsletter

Two [2] issues were produced highlighting:

- The Solidarity Movement and Wage Negotiations
- Support your Union
- Welcome to New Members
- Celebrating Member Achievement
- Excerpts from the Bluebook
- Upcoming Events
- In Memoriam
- Your FSSU & You
- Scholarships & Bursaries

ADZE Magazine: 60th Edition

The publication of the 60th Edition of the ADZE Magazine was finalized during the period under review. The magazine will be shared on the Union's website for all to enjoy.

65th Anniversary Memorialization activities

The PR&PC submitted a proposal for a 20 page document to memorialize the 65th anniversary. The proposal included the articles for inclusion such as messages from the president, WIGUT scholarships and bursaries, WIGUT public service and a highlight of 65th activities from start of 2023. The team has begun to collect invoices for printing and will hand over the planning and publication responsibilities to the incoming committee.

WIGUT Website

During this period, the PR&P Committee monitored and directed the update of the Union's Website including site maintenance and content management.

Software for publication activities

The PRP/WIGUT acquired the Canva Software which is being used for the production and publication of the WIGUT Newsletter and other WIGUT Publications.

Social Media presence

During the year, the Union maintained its social media presence via the WIGUT (Jamaica) Facebook page. The page is kept current by periodic updates with content relevant to all members.

Campus Security

Turning our attention now to Security Committee, the year started with two noteworthy changes in Campus security: (1) the service providers for security on the campus changed from Guardsman to King Alarm and (2) the Chair for the Campus Security Committee changed from Professor Ian Boxill to Professor Suzette Haughton. A three-year contract was signed between the Mona Campus and King Alarm to establish their working relationship.

Technology Upgrade

During the year, the campus invested in technology to strengthen its security coverage. Efforts are in progress to build out a network that will meet current and future needs of the campus. Much of the work was still in progress at the time of writing this report. In addition to these, other efforts include access control to offices and other buildings, student verification system on some halls of residence, with upgrades on Queens Way and Post Office gates, and restoration of the tele-entry system at College Common.

Noise disturbances from Public Events staged on the Campus

During the year, noise from public events staged on the campus escalated and this has become a nuisance to residents living on College Common and other members of the Campus community. The continuous loud noise, for long hours, over an extended period (sometime three or four nights), negatively impacts the staff members living on College Common and students on the Campus' Halls of Residence. Additionally, as these events have increased in some locations where students had to navigate the space to get to their halls of residence, they have encountered challenges, as the organizers assumed they were trying to enter the event without payment.

Some of the other challenges include an overlap in the rental of spaces, which give rise to multiple noise-generating activities taking place at the same time on the Campus and sometimes taking place without the knowledge of the Office of the Director of Security. A committee has been established and protocols are being drafted to govern the staging of public events on the Campus.

Protocols for non-campus persons who exercise in the space

As the Campus works towards regulating all activities taking place on the premises, a committee has been set up to draft protocols for persons who access the campus for their regular physical activity, such as jogging or walking.

Increase in attempted theft of vehicles

During the year, the Office of the Director of Security took note that incidences of motor vehicle theft were increasing. This development was being closely monitored by Campus Security.

Enhanced Lighting on the campus

The need for enhanced lighting on the campus was being addressed in a campus-wide project by the Estate Management Department.

Non-UGC Entities funded security

During the reporting period, the Security Committee was advised that all non-UGC entities will now have to fund their own security.

The University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) Road Project

The UHWI embarked on a road project in April which will last for approximately six months. A request was made and approved by the Mona Campus administration for vehicles from the hospital to be parked on the campus during the period. The parking is located in the open space between the Faculty of Medicine and Taylor Hall. Vehicles will carry campus stickers. If the project overruns its projected timeline and goes into graduation time, then it will have to make the space available for graduation.

Students' Shuttle Buses

The Students' Shuttle Bus Service which was operated by the Office of the Director of Student Services and Development was unavailable for the 2023 -2024 academic year. The buses, which were used for an external service are still awaiting repairs.

Escort Service - Office of the Director of Security

A challenge was identified in the operation of the Students Escort Service which was operated by Campus Policy through the Office of the Director of Security. The limited resources in the form of manpower had put a strain on the initiative as the police officers being called upon to facilitate the Escort Service were also the ones being called to respond to emergencies, incidents, patrols, inter alia. Both services were, therefore, overwhelmed with demands.

The need for a dedicated driver for the Students Escort Service was highlighted. A plan is being developed and protocols drafted by the Director of Security and the Director of Student Services and Development for the escort and bus services. A team has been identified to address these concerns.

Security Hot Spots

The spine from Shed Lane behind Mary Seacole hall, through the parking lot at the Health Centre to Rex Nettleford, Preston and 138 Leslie Robinson halls is still a major security concern, and members are advised to exercise caution if/when traversing the corridor.

Welfare of Security Guards

During the year, the welfare of security guards was also addressed. A number of guard houses were renovated and the basic amenities were upgraded. This process is still ongoing. The security providers have issued umbrellas, raincoats and hats to the guards, while the Campus is in the process of obtaining proper chairs for the manning at the gates.

Use of Fire Arms on the Campus

Following an incident with a private fire arm holder last year, the Campus was redrafting its firearm policy for review and implementation.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee

Health and Safety Policy

The Health and Safety Policy was approved and was now in effect on the campus.

Risk of Motor Vehicular Accidents on Campus

Directional signs have been erected to address the risk of motor vehicle accidents on the campus. However, there are lingering concerns regarding motorists who continue to drive the wrong way on the campus. For your personal safety, members are asked to remain vigilant.

Building repairs

Repairs to some buildings across the campus have been undertaken. These include the UWI Health Centre, The Mary J. Seiwright building, the Faculty of Law and the New Arts Block at the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The repair works done include fixing uneven tiles, removing termite-infested doors and furniture, as well as roof repairs.

Safety Inspections and Indoor Air Quality Assessments

These activities were conducted in various departments/units since September 2023. The areas include Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Computing, the School of Education, the Biotechnology Centre, The Mary J. Seiwright Building, the UWI Health Centre, and the Social Work Training and Research Centre.

Other Projects

The OSH unit spearheaded several projects and programs geared at staff welfare. Some of the activities from which staff have benefitted include the Colon Cancer Symposium held on March 20, the Health Fair and Blood Drive on March 26, and Cervical Cancer screening day on Friday April 26.

Other programmes which are of benefit to our members are the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the UWI Moves Fitness program.

Sabbatical Leave Committee

The Sabbatical Leave (SL) Committee met (July 21st and August 11th, 2023) to consider applications for the **Academic Year 2024-2025**. Applications not processed within those meetings were subsequently reviewed by round-robin. Present were two representatives from WIGUT, two representatives from Management and the Secretary to the Committee.

1. The current Sabbatical Pool fund balance was provided for Mona. It was agreed that there were sufficient funds to support all Mona applications if the candidates were deemed eligible.

2. As had obtained for several years now, the fund balance for the Centre Sabbatical applicants was not available. The Centre had been invited to send a representative to the Sabbatical Leave Committee meeting. The meeting was advised that, as obtained on other campuses, the committee should review applicants from the Centre and provide its recommendations. The Centre would then review the recommendations and determine whether or not to award Sabbatical Leave based on the recommendations given. Centre applicants would therefore not be submitted to the Campus Appointments Committee. The SL Committee complied with the request.
3. There were thirty-three (33) requests for Sabbatical Leave; thirty-one (31) applications were from Mona and two (2) were from Centre. Additionally, 3 deferrals were tabled from Mona. From the overall requests, one applicant did not qualify on the basis of points (previous SL was taken 4 years before), 2 applicants failed to upload a Programme of Work (POW), the POW was incomplete for 2 applicants, and 3 applicants failed to submit supporting information that had been repeatedly requested.
4. Length of service ranged from 6 years to 23 years for Mona applicants and 10 years & 27 years for applicants from the Centre.
5. Thirty (30) Mona applicants were deemed qualified by points, and recommendations were made to Campus Appointments Committee (CAC) for members with completed applications to be awarded Sabbatical Leave. Applications with missing supporting information were referred to the CAC for their decision.

Note:

- a. The CAC met January 30, 2024, to consider recommendations from the SL Committee, presented by the Chair of that committee, on the 2024-2025 applicants and to award Sabbatical Leave.
- b. Minutes of the SL Committee meetings and the matrix detailing applicants' leave data and POW submissions were tabled.
- c. The CAC was informed that, in keeping with the proposal presented to the CAC the previous academic year, a workshop had been hosted by the HRMD to clarify the process for SL applications, the requirements for the POW and issues typically encountered by the SL Committee in its deliberations. It had been well attended.
- d. Candidates (3) whose POW were deemed relevant to their career path and UWI's strategic objectives (see WIGUT Collective Agreement 2014-2017, clause 13), but with insufficient supporting information, were conditionally approved by the CAC for SL awards, pending submission of the requested information within a further 2 weeks to the relevant HRMD section. No further meetings of the CAC were to be held to consider these applicants.
- e. CAC proposed that one applicant was to be asked to defer SL and use it instead to finalise their proposed programme. Requests for SL from 5 applicants were not approved by the CAC.

6. **Summary:** Of the 31 Mona SL applications, 21 were awarded SL, 3 were conditionally approved, 6 were not approved and one applicant did not qualify. There were also 3 approved SL deferrals. The 2 Centre applications were reviewed and referred to Centre Appointments Committee.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Car Duty Concession

The Union approved 71 applications for motor vehicle concession during the period.

Scholarship and Bursaries

During the year WIGUT (Jamaica) continued to award an annual scholarship and student bursaries through the Office of Student Financing.

- ❖ A cheque in the amount of \$430,000.00 was handed over to the Office of Student Financing on January 10, 2024 which represented payment towards tuition for five (5) beneficiaries of the 2023/2024 WIGUT (Jamaica) Scholarships & Bursaries for the 2023/2024 Academic Year.
- ❖ A cheque in the amount of \$350,000.00 was handed over to the University of the West Indies (Mona) on March 22, 2024, which represented payment for WIGUT Student Bursaries for the year 2023/2024.

Ms. Alexi Rhoden from the Faculty of Social Sciences was the recipient of the Joe Pereira Scholarship for 2023/2024.

Donations

WIGUT (Jamaica) purchased:

- 10 tickets at a total cost of \$30,000.00, in support of the Jamaica Red Cross' Mother's Day Brunch, held on Sunday, May 14, 2023 at the Girl Guides Headquarters, 2 Waterloo Road, Kingston 10; and
- 10 tickets at a total cost of \$60,000.00 in support of the SCR Club's Fundraising Brunch on October 29, 2023 to provide scholarship for students at The UWI.

WIGUT Secretariat

Special commendations and thanks must be given to the two full time, one part-time, and one relief staff who manage the daily operations of the WIGUT Secretariat. Indeed, the work of the General Secretary was made much smoother by the support of Ms. Frances Richards and Mr. Gavin Walters, consummate professionals who are committed to service of the Union.

I also must thank the hardworking Executive and Management Committees, along with all Committee and Special Secretaries and Section Representatives for leading in the varies areas during the administrative year. Your service is noteworthy, and the Union commends you for your commitment and dedication. Thank you!

Anthia Muirhead