



## Lisa Cummins

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UWI CONSULTING

UWI Consulting Inc. (UWIC) continued to leverage and augment The UWI's capacity to provide advisory services to national, regional and multi-lateral institutions as part of the financial diversification of its funding base outlined in the 2012-2017 strategic plan.

In March 2016, UWIC recruited a new Executive Director with a view to bringing a new set of skills to the company which had been recording consistent financial challenges over the years. A thorough assessment of the firm's performance since inception was conducted in late 2016 and the findings highlighted an urgent need for operational streamlining, rebranding, and negotiation of global and regional partnerships to enhance competitiveness and relevance. While The UWI had been delivering extensive research on nearly every policy intervention in the region, the feedback from stakeholders did not demonstrate that former and potential clients considered UWIC to be offering thought leadership, providing solutions to regional problems, and there had been few inroads made into the development of a strong private sector.

Those findings also suggested that UWIC had an opportunity to leverage the work of The UWI, the research base of the Institution and convert those assets into a basis for comprehensive leadership by The UWI in the region at a time of trial. Additionally, the University offered consulting services across faculties, centres, departments and campuses and the market was unclear on how to engage The UWI through a single portal. The need for financial diversification and mobilisation of The UWI campuses, was in direct competition with equal internal services across the campuses and with UWIC.

UWIC therefore in 2016 undertook an extensive process of:

- Reviewing the consulting offerings of UWI faculties, centres and companies.
- Establishing relationships with large consulting firms to build specialised relationships.
- Creating a base for the development of a new product offering from the UWIC that would mitigate the financial challenges of The UWI.

- Assessing mechanisms by which UWIC would leverage UWI Research into policy inputs and thought leadership on policy development for consulting purposes.
- Creating new partnerships with international agencies and firms who would provide a platform for UWIC's extra-regional expansion.
- Exploring joint partnerships with UWI faculties, centres and departments to negate external competition.

During this time the firm would undergo significant human resources changes as the company evolved. The staff complement of UWIC went from eight staff members at Headquarters to just three Administrative support team members and two technical staff members including the Executive Director.



They were:

Executive Director - Ms Lisa Cummins

Projects and Portfolio Officer - Ms Melissa Johnson

Business Development Officer I - Ms Kerryann Hodges

Administrative Assistant - Accounts - Ms Claudine Hylton

Administrative Assistant - Operations - Mrs Merlene Grant

The decision was made that the company would pare down its staffing complement to the absolute minimum during the period of rationalisation and once restructuring had been completed and the new UWIC created, then new skills, based on the new needs of the company would be hired. This process continued throughout the period under review.

UWIC also began the process of establishing an office on the Cave Hill Campus of The UWI in order to forge closer relationships with the major development partners servicing the region headquartered in Bridgetown. These

partners included the European Union Delegation to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and the Caribbean Development Bank, two major funders of regional projects.

## MANAGEMENT OF PROJECTS

While undergoing restructuring during the period, UWIC managed four projects - three of which were completed in the financial year. The clients included the Companies Office of Jamaica; the Ministries of Education and Public Security in Guyana and the Development Bank of Jamaica.

UWIC conducted a Strategic Review of the operations of the Companies Office of Jamaica, the first such to be done for the entity since becoming an executive agency. The consultants presented the findings to the Companies Office Executive Management in November 2016, and submitted the final report in February 2017.

The company submitted final deliverables for the Curriculum Reform for the University of Guyana's Science and Technology project. This included course outlines, curriculum development workshops and support to colleagues undertaking piloting of the revised courses. From January to April 2017, UWIC delivered an integrated Public Relations Strategy to the Ministry of Public Security of Guyana. The firm also coordinated and executed a capacity building workshop for select members of the Ministry and its agencies with responsibility for public relations outputs.

The Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) commissioned the services of UWIC Consulting Inc. to create and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation study of its Financial Education programme. The 18-month project will see the firm developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Bank, the findings of which will assist in determining the impact of the initiative on micro and small entrepreneurs.

During this year, UWIC continued to manage existing long term projects on its books including the World Bank Managed Caribbean Mobile Innovation Project (CMIP). The project facilitated training, mentorship and incubation support for more than 200 tech entrepreneurs across the region. This included two cohorts of entrepreneurs completing the Lean Start Up training programme.

The project also successfully executed two pitch competitions. Pitch IT 2.0 was held in Trinidad and Tobago in December 2016, and immersed 25 regional entrepreneurs in a venture development boot camp, supported by international coaches and mentors. This was followed by Pitch It 3.0, held in St. Kitts in June 2017. The project provided the top five start-ups from each Challenge event with seed funding and investor readiness training to support further growth. Entrepreneurs were also funded to attend an international demo trek, providing them with a global platform to demonstrate their products and services.

Total revenue to the firm amounted to US\$329,662.66.

#### *Training of Personnel from the Ministry of Public Security and its agencies in February 2017*

At the end of 2017, UWIC had completed its review process and begun to form the structure around a new company. One of UWIC's major decisions was to focus on creating a company which mirrored major consulting firms against whom it had undertaken market research and comparative studies. It was agreed that in the following year the company would undertake brand strategy research, market intelligence reviews and develop speciality practices based on the findings of a university-wide review of consulting offerings. UWIC needed to specialise in a number of core areas and the market research to be conducted was being designed to determine, using empirical analysis and The UWI strategic plan for 2017-2022, what those areas of specialisation would be.



It is expected that this foundation work would be used in 2017-2018 to present a new company to the University and regional community that would be the front facing commercial arm of The UWI, play a leadership role in diversifying its funding base through targeted interventions, a diversified portfolio and see The UWI expanding its scope into extra-regional spaces.