

Notes for remarks to the members of the Rotary East Club,

East Villa, Nassau

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Building the University of The Bahamas

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you for the invitation to join you today to talk about the past, present and future of The College – soon to be The University of The Bahamas.

First, the past.

The College was founded to be a source of academic and intellectual leadership in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and to educate and train Bahamians for the purposes of self fulfillment, productive work and nation building. The College of The Bahamas Act, created in 1974, was revised in 1995. This revision allowed the College greater financial autonomy, opened up its organisational structure, gave authority to grant degrees and empowered it to seek and receive private funding.

For the first twenty years of its existence, the College offered two-year associate degrees in addition to a number of undergraduate diplomas and certificates. Our graduates of the two-year programmes, have enjoyed great success and immediately or eventually went on to attend some of the very best universities in The Caribbean, The United States, Canada and The UK.

In 1991, The College began to offer a number of baccalaureate programmes, starting with the Bachelor of Business Administration.

Throughout these years, the qualifications of faculty also increased and more and more of the faculty began to have terminal degrees, usually doctorates. This was in large part due to enlightened policies supporting the professional development of faculty. We also built a strong support staff team in areas ranging from security services to information technology. And we had the benefit of successive thoughtful leadership in both the administration and on Council.

We also began to build our Alumni programmes whose flagship activity is, of course, our Hall of Fame induction. We have now inducted Bishop Neil C Ellis in 2001, financial expert Larry Gibson in 2002, pharmacist Laura Pratt-Charlton in 2003, attorney at law Tanya McCartney in 2004, Ms Vernice Walkine in 2005, and Police Superintendent Keith Bell in 2006. All of these graduates of The

College stand in testimony to what the College has achieved over the years. Further, fully 17% of elected members of The National Assembly are also alumni.

Where are we now? A few quick facts

- Today we offer on a free-standing basis, 6 baccalaureate degrees with 59 majors and 3 associate degrees
- We also offer the UWI law programme which we expect to make our own by 2009 as well as 4 graduate degrees in collaboration with universities such as Kent State.
- The College's enrolment in January 2007 was 5,409, 622 of which were at the Northern Bahamas Campus
- In any given semester, the proportion of students enrolled part-time hovers around 40%
- As of January 2007, there were 224 regular full-time faculty. In addition the College utilises about 70 part-time faculty.
- As of January 2007, the College employed 373 staff in support and administrative roles
- The operating budget of the College for the year 2006-2007 is \$41,396,400
- Between 2005 and 2007, the College invested \$12,395,541 in infrastructure improvement
- We have activities in New Providence, in Grand Bahama, in Exuma, in Andros and in San Salvador
- We have signed agreements to collaborate with 2 universities in the past year, one with The University of Rhode Island where 2 Bahamian students from The College are currently on exchange and one with The University of Johannesburg where we hope to start exchanges next fall. We also have a new exchange programme with Monroe College in NYC in the area of tourism and hospitality.

We are building The University of The Bahamas block by block.

Why and why now?

First, it was always envisioned that someday The College would take the next step to University status and the time has come to do so. The College has been successful. Its contribution to national development is clear. An entire generation of Bahamians, many of whom now occupy positions of influence within the country, began their higher education at the College.

It has acquired a reputation for quality in its academic programmes. It has met its mandate as an institution which offered and continues to offer associate degrees. Graduates of these associate degree programmes were later admitted, through articulation agreements, to the best universities across North America. The College's 15-year experience with baccalaureate degrees has been equally successful.

Second, there is a need for increased higher education to service the national human resources needs required to meet a growing and changing economy. Strong foreign direct investment, intense development across the archipelago, and an increasingly globalized economy make it essential that the nation offers its citizens the type and level of education which will allow Bahamians to participate in the economy at all levels.

Key areas of the economy requiring well educated Bahamians are the tourism and hospitality sector and the financial services sector. In addition, there are also urgent and pressing needs in marine and environmental science, maritime law and the maritime shipping industry, construction, marina management, agriculture, fisheries, education, public policy, health and allied health, culture, entrepreneurship and more. Each of these areas is crucial to the sustainable growth of the nation, either through developing key industries or ensuring the well-being of our natural environment. Further, three potentially important areas for building a skilled and diversified Bahamian workforce which also overlap with key disciplinary developments for innovation are: (1) pure and applied sciences, (2) engineering, and (3) information technology. For example, it is felt by The Bahamas Society of Engineers that the number of major development projects on the horizon will require the

education of a cadre of specialists in engineering and related fields. With respect to information technology, this has relevance to all industries and both users and suppliers of these technologies are actively seeking trained talent and the trend is likely to grow. In all these sectors, a strong, well-educated Bahamian work force is critical; one capable of guiding sustainable development and of ensuring ongoing healthy economic growth.

Third, The Bahamas requires increased research capacity. Whether in relation to matters of environmental concern, economics, sustainable development, public policy, education, health or entrepreneurship, there is a need for knowledge to be created in this country, in this context. Further, there are areas where research carried out in The Bahamas can meet high standards of excellence on the international stage. Research informs human and national development and it is urgent that The Bahamas develop the capacity to support research and researchers in the country.

Fourth, universities the world over are drivers of innovation and prosperity and every country which seeks to create a prosperous and successful future looks to its universities as places where the combination of talented faculty, gifted students, international scholars, relationships with industry, and adequate research and development facilities can create ideas which will drive innovation.

It is this particular mix of activities which allows the conditions for innovation to flower and for prosperity to take hold. Innovation in this context means the particular result of research both pure and applied which leads to transformations of products or processes which lead to new patents, or spin offs or small businesses. Maybe we can figure out how to package guava duff for sale both in the country and for export or how to create eco-tourism experiences for visitors or how to innovate in the financial services sector and develop new products and services.

Finally, 30 years after independence and at a time of rapid economic growth, The Bahamas must support and produce learning and teaching at the highest levels and keep its most talented and educated as faculty and staff at The University of The Bahamas to build the future of the nation.

This was the why. Now the how.

We have identified nine core strategies which are guiding our work.

1. Build for Excellence

As the national university, The University of The Bahamas must build for excellence in all dimensions. The creation of a university is a major investment made by all Bahamians and deserves a commitment to excellence in teaching, research and service.

2. Identify competitive advantages

The University of The Bahamas must at all times seek to identify those areas where by virtue of our particular context, history, geography and culture, we can offer programmes and services that can be best in class.

3. Support innovation and initiative

The move to university must bring with it a renewed commitment to innovation. We will need to find ways to encourage the values of innovation, initiative, creativity and risk-taking. At times, we will undoubtedly make mistakes; without failures we would not be creating anything new.

4. Engage and empower people

We have many creative and talented people and the efforts of everyone will be utilized to meet our goals. The professional development of all faculty and staff within the University will be pursued and many members of our community will assume leadership roles in their respective areas to ensure that we take advantage of their talents.

5. Focus on goals, results and the long term

We will advance our agreed goals. We will be alert to the management of unexpected and unintended outcomes and mindful that building a university is a long-term process.

6. Demonstrate transparency and accountability

As the national university, we will exemplify best practices with respect to transparency and accountability and we will build our public support on the strength of our demonstrated ability to keep our promises.

7. Engage the country

The creation of the national university will require broad public support and deep public and private investment. We will engage all sectors of the country in this process and make the case for the investment required in the university.

8. Respond to national needs

The University will be a pool of expertise which will inform national policy and development. The University will play an important role in developing environmental awareness and will itself be a responsible steward of resources.

9. Respect and care for students

We will create an accessible environment which develops the entire person; persons who can fully participate in community and economic activities.

These strategies are meant to be deployed in meeting all our goals and we shall soon be launching our full draft strategic plan for consultation in the community and we hope we will have broad and significant response from all sectors on the specific goals we are pursuing in all our areas of activity.

Our how, however, includes not only key strategies and goals but some very important assumptions. We cannot build The University of The Bahamas on the resource base given to The College of The Bahamas.

We are making the following assumptions with respect to the growth and expansion of our resource base.

1. There will be national support

The creation of a national university is a national project, one very closely tied to nation-building and our first assumption is that the nation will be supportive of this venture. We assume that all major stakeholders in the country share our view that it is time to build a university and to expand our academic and outreach programmes, our research and our capacity to take our place in the international family of universities.

2. Public funding will grow

The second assumption is that public funding will be set at a level which allows for the realization of this plan. The current level of resources is inadequate to meet the goals outlined. The College of The Bahamas is currently funded on a historical grant which does not take into account the actual costs of delivering programmes and which does not account for increased enrolment and the consequent costs of services. Indeed, while there has been additional investment in education as a whole, the College’s share of the education budget has decreased (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Evolution of public expenditure in education in The Bahamas

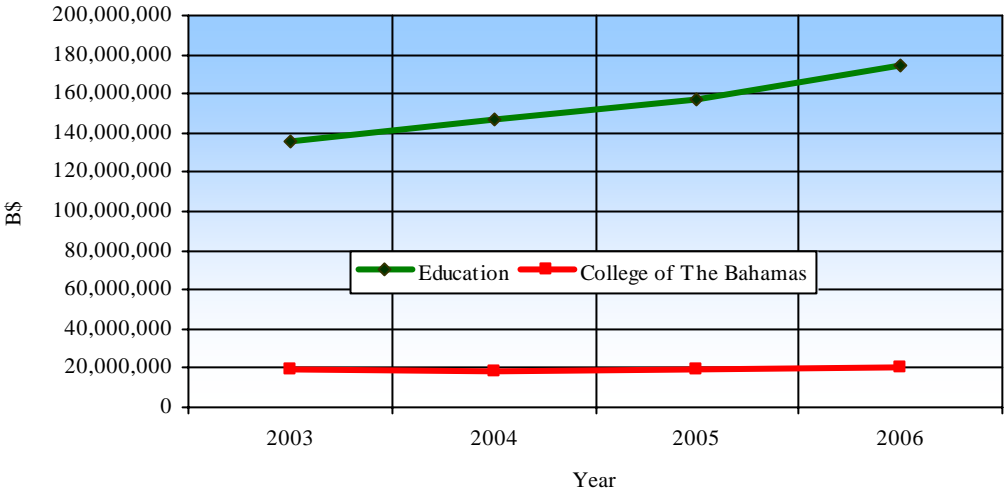


Figure 2 indicates the value of loans to students enrolled in higher education for the years 2000-2003. Bahamian students who study at home receive a lower average level of loan than Bahamian students who study in all other countries except those in Africa. While this is undoubtedly related to the actual costs, including much higher tuition, incurred when studying elsewhere, it

suggests that an investment in excellence could well be financially advantageous to students and to the nation.

Figure 2. Average Value of Loan by Country of Study

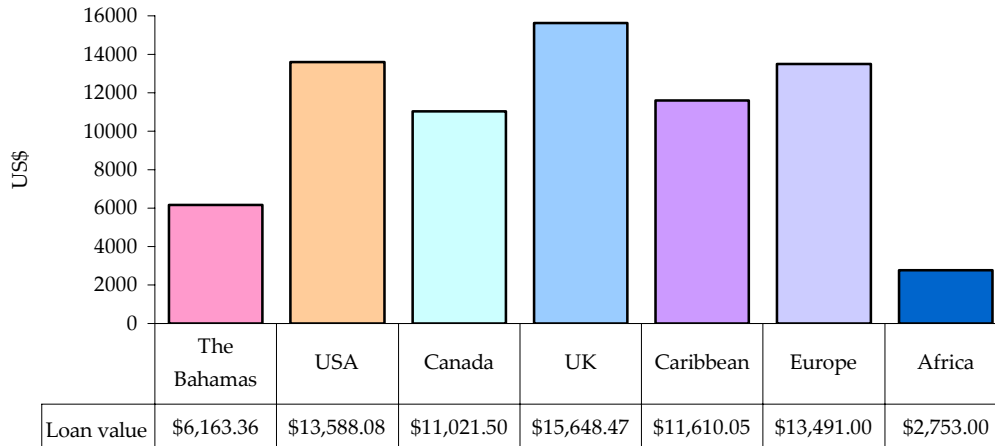
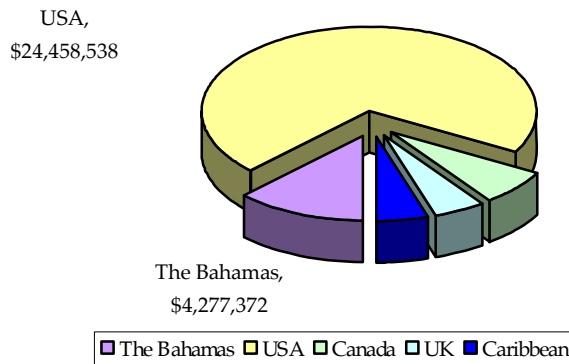


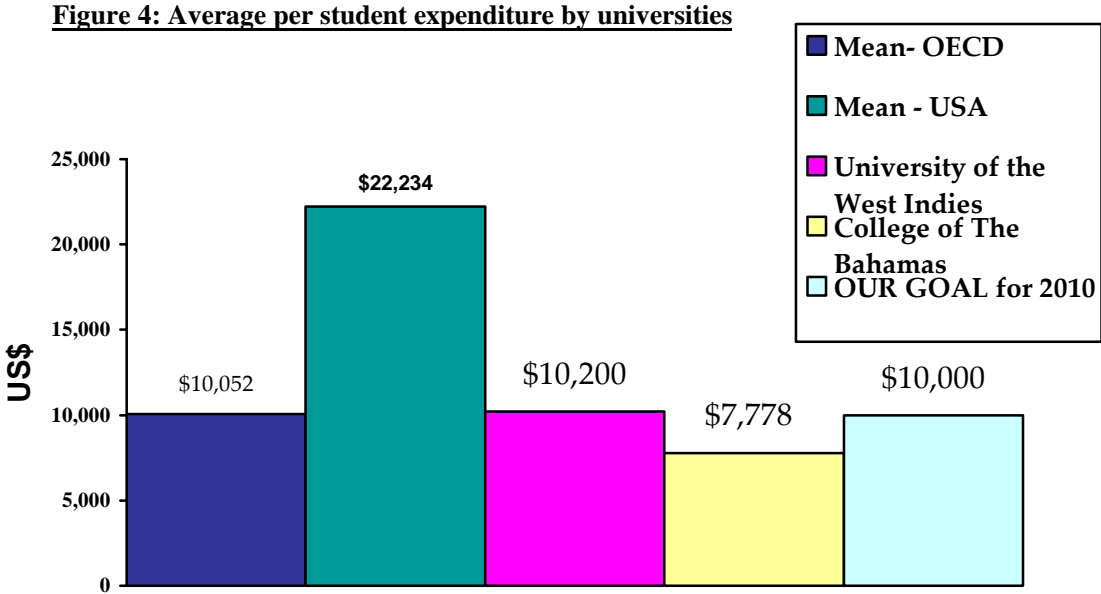
Figure 3 indicates the overall investment The Bahamas Government has made in supporting Bahamian students studying overseas during 2000-2003.

Figure 3: Investment in Bahamian Student Loans for the 2000-2003 period by country of study



This pattern of funding Bahamian students to study abroad has its roots in history, and undoubtedly there are cases where such funding is required when, for example, a programme necessary for the development of the nation is not available at home. It is, however, precisely this absence of relevant and excellent programmes in certain required fields that a national university is intended to redress. The pattern has unintended consequences; investment in tuition loans to

universities that charge higher tuition increases the capacity of those universities to provide higher quality services. Figure 4 shows the average investment universities in different countries make in their university students and what we would like to invest.



3. Tuition levels will reflect costs and will increase

Student tuition must grow and so must student aid. In other words, those who can pay should pay a fair cost for their education and, those who cannot, should have access to loans and financial aid. In both cases, the policy must encourage the building of national capacity and a national university capable of delivering a level of quality similar to what students expect when they attend universities in other countries.

4. Philanthropy will grow

The University of The Bahamas requires private as well public support. While The College of The Bahamas has benefited from donor generosity since its inception, particularly in the form of scholarships, special efforts are now required if The University of The Bahamas is to build the quality expected of a national university. A key goal will thus be the execution of a successful major funding campaign at a level that has not yet been realized in The Bahamas.

5. There will be a national endowment for The University of The Bahamas

We propose that the government of The Bahamas creates a national endowment for the University of The Bahamas to be funded from foreign direct investment related to major development agreements. This effort would be separate from the philanthropic activity at The University of The Bahamas. The National Endowment would be managed as an independent foundation with its own board of trustees whose mission would be to grow the endowment and to fund key projects of The University of The Bahamas.

As we build for the medium and long term we are also deeply engaged in major short-term projects. Among these are the construction of The Library, the construction of a new Northern Bahamas campus, the increase in the number of terminal degree holders among the faculty, the improvement to the registration process, the adoption of a new quality assurance framework, the expansion of our international links and our research activity, the development of new outreach programmes and distance education, the review of our governance, planning the new statute and the quiet phase of a comprehensive campaign.

I should enjoy coming back and presenting our detailed strategic plan to you but I hope that today I have given you a flavour of the very important work being done at The College to build the nation. We have a very strong team at The College and we are united in our purpose to build The University. We are counting on your support as well.

Thank you.

