



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

MEDIA RELEASE

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Professor Dale Webber, Pro-Vice Chancellor & Principal UWI, Mona holds the symbolic sponsorship cheque valued at J\$1 Million dollars being presented by Jacqueline Burrell-Clarke, Director of Communications and Community Relations at New Fortress Energy as Dr. Nagarani Ponakala, Head of the Mathematics Department at The UWI Mona and Mr. St. Elmo Whyte, Deputy Chairman Olympiad Competition looks on.

New Fortress Energy powers Jamaican Mathematical Olympiads with J\$1M Sponsorship

Kington, Jamaica. June 1, 2021: This year's staging of the annual Jamaican Mathematical Olympiad has been powered by the support of the New Fortress Energy (NFE). The New

Fortress team recently presented its title sponsorship cheque valued at J\$1 million to the organizing committee of the two national mathematics competitions each year - the Senior Mathematical Olympiad, open to any high school student Grades 7-11, and the Junior Mathematical Olympiad, which is open to any upper primary student (Grades 4-6).

In an effort to engage students at the primary and high school levels engaged in STEM subjects, specifically Mathematics, The University of the West Indies (The UWI), Mona Campus, led by the Department of Mathematics, organizes this significant calendar event. This year, some 2456 students from 68 schools registered for the Junior Mathematics Olympiad this year and some 737 students from 18 schools registered for the Jamaican Mathematics (Senior) Olympiad.

“As you know, NFE has a longstanding relationship with The UWI spanning an LNG CHP Plant, our annual tertiary scholarship programme, our recently established Cryogenics Engineering course which includes hands-on internship at our Plants and now the Mathematical Olympiads,” stated Mrs. Jacqueline Burrell-Clarke, Director of Communications and Community Relations at New Fortress Energy.

She further mentioned, “When you think about it-this represents a 360-degree STEM support by NFE across Jamaica-starting from the Primary School level all the way up to when these young minds enter the working world and start playing their part in helping to grow our economy.”

Adjustments made this year to the Olympiad format due to COVID-19 restrictions, include the competitions being held online with students taking multiple-choice exams over the internet, and a reduction in the rounds for both the Junior and Senior Olympiads from four (4) to three (3).

“I must use this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to New Fortress Energy and our other sponsors for once again collaborating with us to support STEM education in Jamaica. Mathematics is at the core of every STEM discipline, and we must work to develop and maintain an educational culture that values mathematics. In this view, I wish to commend the Department of Mathematics, under the leadership of Dr. Ponakala, for persevering to keep the competitions going despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus,” Professor Dale Webber, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Mona Campus.

Junior Olympiad

This year, for the Junior Olympiad, each student received a username and a password which provides access to a testing platform designed and operated by The UWI’s Mona Information Technology Services (MITS). The first round took place on Thursday, April 15. Of the more than 2000 students who registered, approximately 60% of them successfully sat this exam. The Semifinal Round Exam was hosted on Tuesday, June 1, and the Final Round Exam will be on Friday, June 25.

Senior Olympiad

For the Senior Olympiad, the first round was staged over two sittings held on Wednesday, March 31 and Thursday, April 22. The Semifinal round was hosted on Wednesday, May 26, and the Final Round Exam will be on Saturday, June 26.

Following the end of both competitions, the Department will hold an Awards Ceremony in August 2021.

Dr. Nagarani Ponakala, Head of the Mathematics Department at The UWI Mona explained, "As one can imagine, this year's competition has been harder to plan than usual. We have developed an entirely new platform for the Olympiads, introduced it to 86 schools and their students, and worked in a constantly changing environment." Dr. Ponakala continued, "Among other things, the dates we need to work around have changed, the students are generally far flung, and they have their own challenges with the technology. Even so, we are committed to finishing this year's competitions and moving into next year's competitions as smoothly as possible."

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an unexpected end to the 2020 UWI/New Fortress Jamaican Mathematical Olympiad midstream but Jamaica was still able to field teams to two international Olympiad events. The teams participated in the XXII Central American and Caribbean Mathematical Olympiad (OMCC) from October 24-30 and in the Iberoamerican Mathematical Olympiad. Jamaica became the first English-speaking country ever to compete in the latter competition where a team member won an Honourable Mention.