

UWI to Provide Training in Animation

The University of the West Indies (UWI) will be collaborating with GSW Animation Limited, Toon Boom Animation Inc. and the World Bank to provide some 50 young persons with training and employment in professional animation.

This move is in line with Jamaica's plans to increase opportunity for local and regional animators to get a foothold in the growing US\$222.8 billion global animation industry. The partnership will see the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) providing training for qualified young persons in a specialised new animation programme for six months at the UWI's Mona and Montego Bay campuses. On successful completion of the training programme, outstanding participants will be able to obtain employment with GSW Animation Limited in the growing field of animation development. Disclosing the details of the partnership during a press briefing, held on the Mona Campus on Friday (July 19), incoming Principal of the UWI, Mona, Professor Archibald McDonald, said the programme will begin in less than a month. Under the programme, trainees will be exposed to a range of professional animation skills sets, including basic principles of animation, digital 2D animation, staging, posing and composition, motion analysis, animating action, character creation, and storytelling. The training programme will utilise software provided by Toon Boom Animation Inc., a Canadian animation company, and students will also benefit from visiting international animation experts, funded by the World Bank, to provide global-level expertise in professional animation. The UWI, through CARIMAC, will provide the necessary certification for all successful participants in the programme. Professor McDonald said it is the hope of the UWI that all students who are trained in the programme will be able to gain early and productive employment in what is emerging as a fast growing and valuable new sector for Jamaica and the Caribbean. "Our involvement in the training programme must be seen as an ongoing engagement in expanding the sector regionally. The interest of the campus is in a sustainable and viable growth industry in which our educational institutions can continue to play a key role in training students at multi levels and producing high quality animation products," he said. The Professor noted that already, the University, through the Faculty of Science and Technology, is equipping a specialised studio for high level experimental learning in 3D animation. Also, CARIMAC has begun preparing an undergraduate programme in animation and broadcast graphics that will be presented for university review very shortly. Director, CARIMAC, Professor Hopeton Dunn, informed that prospective candidates of the programme are required to have at least five CXC's, including passes in English Language, Mathematics, Visual Arts and/or Computer Science. "Obviously the candidates have to be computer literate and graphics oriented, but also willing to learn quickly, and disciplined enough to come to the sessions and to report for classes," he said. Professor Dunn further informed that the criteria also include a "flexi-clause," which makes provision for candidates with "other qualifications deemed to be the equivalent." "This is a device we use for the bright, young kid who really didn't get the CXC, but who can blow us all away in terms of his creativity. Some may be able to establish this through portfolios, others may be able to establish it through demonstrations to a crediting panel, so that will be the approach we will take," he said. He informed that the course will carry a cost; however those details are still being "worked out" and will be made public in short order. "What I can say right now is that when we calculate the economic cost per student for delivery of this particular programme, for many of the prospects, it is going to be too expensive. Therefore, we will be looking to partners to provide supplementation to the students in the form of scholarships and fellowships," he said. Professor Dunn therefore appealed to Corporate Jamaica, "to join us in helping to supplement the tuition of qualified participants, who cannot afford the cost."