

# Nettleford challenges UWI to take stock, plan for future

**NEWLY** installed vice chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor Rex Nettleford, on Saturday committed himself and his colleague academics to continue to improve the relevance and quality of courses offered at the region's highest institution of learning.

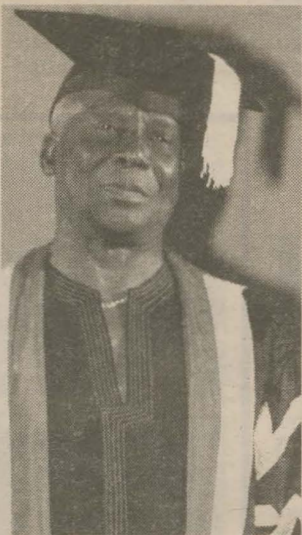
Speaking at his official induction ceremony, Nettleford, said the UWI must now pace itself strategically to face the challenges of the new millennium.

Nettleford noted that on the threshold of the 21st century, it was time for the university to take stock of its achievements in the last 50 years, while making strategic plans for its future.

"This is a time for us to ask questions of what is or what should be expected of us," he said.

Referring to the calibre of graduates, he questioned whether they had sufficiently grasped the concept of service. He also pointed to the need for the university to produce future leaders who would be able to bring to their various tasks creative minds and a determination to help others who had not achieved similar educational opportunities.

According to Nettleford people from the region must be prepared to approach information and the global



**NETTLEFORD...urges greater support for distance education programme**

information society with the ability to analyse, select and to incorporate the relevant parts into an existing knowledge base, the people of the Caribbean may well have to be content with the notion of being "hewers of wood and drawers of water".

The specific challenges and paths faced by the university, he noted, would involve the collaboration from its staff and affiliates to meet the challenges of the new century.

"The University of the West Indies is on the path to increase the number of students who can enter the institution as the

present percentage of the population with this opportunity is unacceptably low," he said.

Nettleford noted his desire, (one shared with his predecessor Sir Alister McIntyre) to upgrade the estimated two per cent to 10 per cent of the age cohort eligible for higher learning.

"For only an educated citizen can produce in a growing economy in the 21st century society; only an educated citizen that is creative and imaginative can sustain a growth, especially when outside assistance is no longer there for the asking," he said.

International organisations such as the World Trade Organisation and NAFTA, he said, would pose challenges for the region's intelligentsia.

"The UWI must now be seen as part of an articulated educational system operating within and beyond national and regional boundaries," Nettleford said.

He also called on his colleagues to show a greater commitment to distance education and also to take a greater interest in sustaining the high quality of the feeder sources of the secondary and primary schools.

Earlier through greetings, song and dance, Nettleford, the first graduate of the UWI to become vice chancellor, was lauded for his appointment from representatives of the Guild of

Students and Graduates, the School of Continuing Studies, Non-Campus countries and also from the principals of the three campuses.

UWI pro-vice chancellor, Sir Shridath Ramphal, also praised Nettleford for his "monumental contribution and amazing achievements, culminating in his appointment as vice chancellor".

Members of the University singers and the National Dance Theatre Company also paid tribute in song and dance.

The ceremony was attended by a host of dignitaries, academics and students from the local, regional and international community as well as members of the artistic community, headed by Governor General Sir Howard Cooke and Lady Cooke and Prime Minister P J Patterson.

Professor Nettleford was appointed as vice chancellor last year.

B/W - Nettleford Rex

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