Vision for the University of the West Indies Medical Alumni

NEW STRATEGIES The University of the West Indies Medical Alumni Jamaica Chapter which has been in existence since 1988 is now faced with challenges which may impact its ability to carry out the mandate for which it was established.

The current executive members have identified new strategies for administrative and fee collections to facilitate expanding membership and greater financial sustainability.

BACKGROUND

The University of the West Indies Medical Alumni Association (UWIMAA) was founded in 1988.

Seven (7) chapters were established in the following countries:

(i) Jamaica, (ii) Barbados, (iii) Trinidad & Tobago, (iv) Bahamas, (v) Central Florida and the (vi) Tri-state Area of the USA; (vii) Canada.

Each Chapter operates autonomously with overall coordination by a Board of Directors made up of Chapter Presidents and a Secretariat, based at UWI Mona.

OBJECTIVES

As outlined in the UWIMAA Constitution, our objectives are:
(a) To generate and promote a spirit of fraternity and unity amongst members of the Association and to provide the means for continuing the association which the alumni enjoyed as students.

(b) To contribute, in as many ways as possible, to the welfare, prestige and excellence of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus (FMS)

c) To promote interest in and co-operation with the Medical Faculty and the University Hospital of the West Indies.

d) To foster and enable an understanding of UWIMAA among the undergraduates of the Medical Faculty.”

UWIMAA SECRETARIAT

To support the work of UWIMAA, each Chapter is required to make an annual contribution towards the expenses of the Secretariat. The contribution for the Jamaica Chapter is US$3,750 per annum. Over the years succeeding executives of the Jamaica Chapter has made it a priority in their fund raising efforts to make this annual contribution. However despite their efforts the Jamaica Chapter’s outstanding contribution now stands at US$15,000 inclusive of the annual contribution for year 2012.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

CURRENT ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (January – December 2012)
per person, payable by or before May each year

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<td>First year post-graduation 2011</td>
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Historically as indicated in the following diagram, the pattern of members who have been paying fees over the period 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; range from 11%; 7%; 8% 6% respectively.
As further demonstrated, the potential for actual contributions (blue column) from payment of dues by members of the Alumni over the past three years [2008-2011] is substantially more.

Members of the Executive in their efforts over the years have tried to introduce novel ways of encouraging alumni to pay the annual subscription. Rather than seeing this as a contribution to one’s alma mater for the honour of being a graduate the retort to the effort has been “what is in it for me?”

Older Alumni who had the good fortune of greater financial support and less demanding personal financial input in their education at UCWI/UWI tend to support the organization more than the recent graduates some of whom have had to pay full fees.

Unfortunately the younger graduates seem to have “no love lost” for their alma mater and contribute reluctantly or not at all. This attitude is not only due to the present fee structure but also results from the inability of our alma mater to ensure a good experience with its administration—especially its students’ affairs section.

The difficulties encountered in trying to collect dues have led to an exploration of other alternatives that may garner greater success.

An article published by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) in their monthly publication Association Now March 2011 entitled “GOODBYE, DUES” and written by Erin M. Fuller, suggests the alternative option of doing away with membership dues.
He states “Many associations with dues-paying members have entertained the notion of turning to a free membership model. But like any radical idea, the devil is in details.” The author labeled the move a “freemium” membership structure in which the majority of members would pay no dues. This freemium” model has been embraced by many persons in the society, particularly in a downturn economy. The concept is based on volunteer payment of fees based on a minimum that is established as a guideline for persons wishing to contribute “.

This concept is finding favour with professional and volunteer groups globally, because current global trends indicate that funding resources are tighter and continue to change negatively. Alumni associations are taking a new look at more varied sources of income. These include: (a) blended source of funding – dues and fees (b) Interdependence vs. Independence (Chapters and Secretariat (c) a focus on priority setting defined by interests of the Alumni, as well as other strategic practices and funding models are some of the approaches being employed worldwide.

It will be proposed that from the year 2012 membership of the Chapter be open to all alumni. Alumni who provide contact information and a willingness to participate in the activities of the organization will be supported in access to information on activities of the Chapter. They will be given the opportunity to contribute to the Chapter’s fund raising events for the University of the West Indies, to maintain connection with colleagues and participate in advocacy without having to pay an annual subscription levied for membership.

It is to be noted that formerly significant emphasis was placed on collection of dues. If the “freemium” is accepted the emphasis will now be placed on voluntary contributions. Whatever amounts received will be acknowledged and recognized.

Administration

A major challenge for UWIMAA Jamaica Chapter has been the availability of an administration for conducting the business of the Organization. This gap has resulted in poor communication,, lack of fellowship with the membership, poor collection of
membership fees and donations. The executive has determined that communication with alumni members of the chapter is critical to the revival of the UWIMAA Jamaica Chapter. It is also recognized that our busy medical practitioners cannot provide volunteer secretariat services in a sustained and meaningful manner.

In recognition of the need of support for the Chapter and in light of the new dispensation at the Secretariat, the Jamaica Chapter has recently entered into arrangement with the UWIMAA Secretariat for the provision of paid services on a retained basis.

The services to be supplied include: database management; general membership and communication services (including a web page); administrative services for collection of donations and handling of membership renewals. This will provide the Jamaica Chapter with an avenue for developing and sustaining programmed activities, aimed at reviving the interest and support of its members, thereby increasing the potential for members contributing to the activities of the Chapter.

The contract which has been signed for one year is based on a retainer fee of $20,000 per month.

In order to ensure sustainability during the first 5 months of the contract, the executive has collected over $100,000 from ten (10) committed members who have contributed $10,000 each.

It is anticipated that further support will be given by members towards the administration as well as the fund raising events which will be undertaken.

CONCLUSION

The executive members are cognizant of the challenges faced by their members in a difficult economic environment.

The plans of the UWIMAA Jamaica chapter will include working collaboratively with corporate institutions in Jamaica to improve and enhance the lives of our members; we will work with government and international health groups where possible to improve the quality of life for our citizens, we will work assiduously on fundraising projects to assist our young medical colleagues as they pursue their education and development and we will strive to enhance the image of UWI medical graduates in the society.

Finally, we will endeavor to bring to the attention of the UWI administration, the concerns of our members regarding the medical programme at UWI Mona.
The participation and contributions of each graduate is critical to our success. If we are to revive the Chapter to the vibrant entity it once was and what it needs to be to support and influence our University of the West Indies, it must be given your enthusiastic, whole hearted support. We look forward to seeing you at our Annual General Meeting.

Howard W. Spencer
May 22, 2012
Donor Information Form For Individual Donors

To ensure your donation is properly recorded and acknowledged, please take a few minutes to complete this form. PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY. [For hard copies please use Legal Size Paper]

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If this donation is “In Memory of” or “In Honor of” someone special, please check one of the boxes below and write in their name:
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Please note that we do not list your address, telephone number, or the actual amount of your donation on our website.

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General Information for Individual Donors
Donations will facilitate:
1. Medical Student prizes and bursaries
2. Support of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Mona
3. Special Chapter projects
4. Maintenance of the UWIMAA Secretariat

Project Updates
As a contributor, you will receive (via email) our UWIMAA Review featuring the latest news on our activities along with updates and photos on the projects we support.

In addition, we encourage you to bookmark our website for more frequent project updates. http://uwimedicalalumniassn.memberlodge.org/Jamaica-Chapter.