

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Laurier to offer business diploma program in Trinidad and Tobago

Waterloo, Ont. (March 17) — Wilfrid Laurier University will offer a program outside Canada for the first time when it takes its successful business diploma program to Trinidad and Tobago this spring.

In co-operation with the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, and the University of the West Indies, Laurier will offer courses in Port-of-Spain toward its diploma in business administration.

Initially, Laurier will provide three courses and, upon completion, the continuation of the project will be evaluated. Over the next two years, the proposal calls for another on-site course taught by a Laurier professor, four courses offered through the University of the West Indies, and another four through Laurier's video distance education program.

Franklin Ramsomair, a professor of business who conceived of the project and negotiated its terms, says it is an excellent opportunity for the university. "Laurier is expanding its horizons and actively instituting a more global outlook.

"The Trinidad and Tobago project is tangible evidence of this outreach philosophy, and will establish links with key countries in the Caribbean Basin," he says.

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Cliff Bilyea, director of part-time studies and continuing education, says, "This is an innovative project that will broaden our learning culture."

Negotiations have been conducted over the past year. Hubert Alleyne, executive director of the Royal Bank, visited the school of business and economics in December to meet faculty members and discuss the program.

"Arrangements between parties who are separated by thousands of kilometres are not easy," says Ramsomair, "and the venture involved time, energy, and an understanding of the tenets of cultural variations."

"We're honored to be involved in this undertaking with Laurier," Alleyne says. It is believed to be the first such venture in the Caribbean and Latin America by a Canadian university.

"We feel the project will assist in developing the educational qualifications and knowledge of people in this part of the world," Alleyne says. "We also hope that, with professors spending time here, we can make a contribution to the understanding of international business."

The evening courses will be offered on a part-time basis to staff members of the Royal Bank and other organizations, as well as members of the general public.

There were more than 100 applications for 40 places in the first course on organizational behavior, which begins later this month. Gene Deszca, a professor of business at Laurier, will teach it.

"In today's world of international business," says Deszca, "this is an experience for Laurier to capitalize on. We're going to be able to have faculty members immersed in another culture."

Deszca is adapting the course content and his teaching methods for Trinidad and Tobago.

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In July, the second course, on data processing and information systems, will be taught in Port-of-Spain. The third course, management of functional areas, will be offered beginning in September as a video distance education course and will include two audio conferences by satellite with the professor.

The project will be officially launched on April 16, with a ceremony in Port-of-Spain, the capital of the Caribbean republic. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Patrick Manning, and Laurier president John Weir will attend.

The project is being operated without provincial government funding. To help offset the cost to students, Laurier is applying for funding through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Concurrent with teaching the courses, Laurier faculty members will be providing executive development seminars through a joint venture of the Royal Bank and the Laurier Institute for Business and Economic Studies.

At the request of its project partners, Laurier is exploring how it could also offer its MBA program in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Note: Gene Deszca can be reached at (519) 884-1970 ext. 6044 through Wednesday, March 25.