**DRAFT SPEECH**

In the words of Kevin Abdulrahman "There is something that you can do, for a greater good, for a greater cause, one that is far bigger than just yourself. Find it, and then, do it. "

Good evening, allow me to adopt the protocol previously established. This evening, I deem it an honor to be here as a proud member of the pelican alumni family to share my UWI Open Scholar experience to you with the hope that you will feel encouraged to contribute to the institution and its respective programs so that more of our region's youth, who may not be able to advance academically without assistance, can have the opportunity that we all had.  
  
Today at this 2022 Global Pelican Award Giving ceremony we salute and commend those who have contributed in any way to the operation of the University of the West Indies. Because of your contribution, students across the region, like myself, were able to advance our education at UWI through various assistance programs like the UWI Open Scholarship of which I was a recipient.  
  
Firstly, allow me to answer the popular question I am usually asked, What is the UWI Open Scholarship?  
The UWI Open Scholarship is the most prestigious of the regional scholarships administered by the University’s Office of the Board for Undergraduate Studies (OBUS). It is funded by the 17 Caribbean governments which contribute to The UWI on an annual basis and other donors who give generously to the fund. The award seeks to attract and reward achievers from across the region. Scholarships are available for study at any of the UWI’s four campuses. Recipients of the scholarship receive full tuition fees, residence costs (on/off campus) and contributions to books and meals.  
  
My UWI journey started in 2016, with a phone call confirming that I was one of the awardees of the UWI Open Scholarship. I was ecstatic because without this opportunity I would not be able to advance my studies. That September I travelled to Jamaica. I missed home, but I quickly adjusted to the University culture. Over the three years that followed, I enjoyed a rich University Experience. The culture at the Rex Nettleford hall, Mona campus, a hall of 800 strong, was always bubbling with activity and my 7 flat mates became the sisters I never had. There were countless notable experiences, but I vividly remember the cluster competitions, the Halloween parties, the dance competitions, the late-night flat chats and Sunday dinners.  
Outside of the hall, the exposure to Jamaica's rich culture and memorable sites further enhanced the experience. As a member of the St. Kitts - Nevis student association we enjoyed excursions to places like Kool Runnings, Blue Lagoon, and Dunn’s River to name a few. As a student of the Caribbean Culture class, we enjoyed trips to Trelawny, Coronation Market, Taboo, Weddy Weddy and numerous authentic Jamaican cultural experiences. In addition to the academia, I was elated to have the opportunity to advance my skills in dance at the UWI Dance Ensemble after a successful audition and participate in the 2016 Dance production. I also sought to be actively involved in the Providence Methodist Youth choir.  
  
In reminiscing, I can't forget to mention the famous Jamaica taxi experiences. Any student who has taken a Jamaican taxi at the back-gate knows that greeting "come baby, one n go, one n go, Papine, Liguena, Halfway Tree come baby”.

Jamaica has a lot to offer to the thriving student, however it is important to mention that the UWI does not limit you to the experience of one campus. By participating in the Student Exchange program, you can visit any campus from an extensive list of campuses around the world from Taiwan, the USA, UK, Germany, Canada, Australia, and other Global choices. Fortunately, through the Caribbean - Canada Student exchange scholarship, I was able to visit the University of Waterloo in Canada for the 2017 Fall semester. While at the school I immersed myself in the Canadian culture with other exchange students from China, France, Hong Kong, Britain, and other places. The exposure to the international landscape not only introduced us to the culture in a different geographic area but it was beneficial in establishing relationships in other universities where one may wish to pursue post graduate studies and exposure to first world methods that can be employed for the region’s development.

Fast forward to November 2019 and I graduated from UWI Mona Campus with a BSc in Statistics, minors in Economics and Demography (First Class Honors). This was possible because of someone’s willingness to donate; someone “pledged to remain a catalyst for Caribbean development and leadership and contribute to help fund the UWI’s programs.  
  
You can join the group of donating Pelican alumni by giving of your time through service, your monetary donations, volunteering for Campus projects, serving on the UWI Alumni Executive or just by simply sharing ideas for the betterment of the institution. For the past two years, I have been giving back to the University by tutoring a short course at St. Kitts UWI Open Campus, and most recently serving on the UWI Alumni Executive. It is quite fulfilling to know that I serve the institution, and I was able to balance this service while pursuing a MSc in Marketing and Data Analytics online with the UWI Mona Campus. The MSc journey was far more challenging however, being able to pursue my studies online showed the versatility of the institution and its ability to adapt to external shocks that demand a virtual environment, like the COVID-19 pandemic. So, even in some small way, you too can give back to the University of the West Indies.  
  
In closing, I invite you to reach out to any of the UWI Alumni Executive members or faculty of the UWI Open Campus St. Kitts - Nevis to find out how you can make your contribution and be an agent of change.

**TIME: 8 minutes 02 seconds**