

Interactive learning centre opens at UWI

Career & Education

BY LUKE DOUGLAS Career & Education writer editorial@jamaicaobserver.com

Sunday, March 21, 2010

THE University of the West Indies (UWI) Geology Museum Interactive Learning Centre opened its doors on March 11, as part of the institution's effort to attract the region's best and brightest students.

The interactive museum features a cutting-edge Smart Board which allows students to touch the screen and discover, for example, the importance of various minerals and rocks found in Jamaica and their use in making products used in our everyday lives.



Students of Angels Primary School examine rock samples at the UWI Geology Museum with Canadian High Commissioner to Jamaica Stephen Halliman (left) and Professor Gordon Shirley,

principal of the University of the West Indies. (Photo: Lionel Rookwood)



The interactive centre is the latest addition to the museum which was established as a reference and display collection of rocks, minerals, fossils and information that explains the geology of Jamaica, and its relevance to the past and future economic, scientific and cultural development of the country.

It was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency to the sum of Can\$9,993, with additional funding provided by the Jamaican Geographical Society and UWI's Department of Geography and Geology.

Dr Sherene James-Williamson, lecturer and curator of the UWI Geology Museum, took students and teachers of Angels Primary School in St Catherine, as well as special guests on a tour of the museum at the recent opening. She said the project should improve career development as the jobs of geologist, museum curator and scientists in general are not popular among Jamaicans.

"I hope that young girls will be able to interact and observe the work of female geologists and may be inclined to think of geology as a career, as this is usually dominated by men," she said.

Guest speaker at the opening, Dr Rebecca Tortello, special advisor to the Minister of Education, congratulated James-Williamson for making learning fun and interesting to the students.

"That fearless approach to teaching is what we need more of, because you are teaching as a facilitator and not like you are in a bank and just depositing information in the students who have come to you," she said.

Tortello noted that most of learning takes place outside of the formal school setting and that museums allow students to choose what they learn.

"People take different things from a museum, even if they have the same tour guide," she added.

Canadian High Commissioner to Jamaica Stephen Halliman said the museum was an important outreach step by UWI to build its relationships with primary and secondary schools and their students.

UWI pro vice-chancellor and principal Professor Gordon Shirley said the university was in the process of improving all of its classrooms, laboratories and other facilities as part of its five-year strategy of providing world-class teaching and learning across its campuses.